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ABSTRACT

"Fostering Discipline" is a manual to be used in education for families who provide service to foster children. It assumes that the participants in the class have had prior instruction in their roles as foster parents, the purposes of foster care, the reasons why children are in care and their relationship with the agency. This instructor's manual, containing information for instructors and participants, is designed to prevent abuse in foster care and deals with some very sensitive material. It challenges many of the traditional ideas that American parents have about child rearing techniques and stresses limits placed on families who provide foster care for children. Overall, the manual argues against any use of corporal punishment with children in foster care and emphasizes positive reinforcement of desired behaviors rather than heavy reliance on punishments of any kind. Organized as a course in 10 sessions, contents focus on defining discipline; the relationship between discipline and how children learn; understanding children's behavior; specifying and assessing behavior and development; identifying and changing problematic behavior; setting rules and consequences; disciplining teens; and handling sexual behaviors. The final two sessions focus on self-assessment and course review. Related material and a list of readings for foster parents are appended. (RH)

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FOSTERING DISCIPLINE.....

prepared for the

Institute for the Study of Children and Families
Eastern Michigan University

by

Patricia Ryan, Ph.D.

INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL

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1983

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Fostering Discipline was developed by Patricia Ryan as a ten-week course to use with foster parents as part of an ongoing foster parent education program. It is designed for use by a variety of agencies in order to upgrade the services foster parents are able to provide for the children in their homes.

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"What The Bible Says About Punishment" reprinted with permission of the author from Evelyn Felkner. Raising Other People's Kids. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1981.

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INSTRUCTOR'S PREFACE

Fostering Discipline is a manual to be used in education for families who provide service to foster children. It assumes that the participants in the class have had prior instruction in their roles as foster parents, the purposes of foster care, the reasons why children are in care and their relationship with the agency. Foster parents who have not had this opportunity through either a pre-service class or in-service education, will undoubtedly raise many questions. They will not be able to directly address the material at hand until some of these questions are answered. We highly recommend that this be a second course offered after the participants have had an opportunity to explore these issues. If it is the first course, one session relatively early in the class should be devoted to discussion of these issues. The Instructor may want to review the material in Issues in Fostering by the author.

The participant's manual is divided into ten sessions. Each session is based on approximately three hours of instruction and discussion. The introductory section of the instructor's manual was prepared by the staff of the Institute for the Study of Children and Families as part of their Foster Parent Education Series. It provides suggestions on physical facilities, room arrangements, and other practical problems that may concern the instructor. The specific instructions for each of the ten sessions preceed the content for the session.

The content in each session is an exact replication of the participant's manual with the answers printed in red. The information in red is not in the participant's manual. You will note that pages in this manual have two separate numbers. The number in the center refers to the page in the participant's manual and the number in the corner is the sequence in this manual.

This manual has been developed to assist instructors in presenting material on discipline in order to prevent abuse in foster care. It deals with some very sensitive material. It challenges many of the traditional ideas that American parents have about child rearing techniques. It stresses the limits placed on families who provide foster care for children. Implicit in the material is the possibility that some of the participants may be using disciplinary techniques which would be ruled as abusive. Participants could lose their license if the material they share in class was used as evidence in a hearing. Each instructor will have to weigh his or her responsibility in helping foster parents grow and learn new and hopefully better ways to work with children against reporting requirements under child abuse statutes in a particular state. This is a subject the instructor should discuss with a knowledgeable person before the class and take responsibility for letting the participants know how the material they share in class might be used outside of the class setting.

If the workbook is used, the instructor may want to consider the two most common complaints we have received--"There is not enough material" and "There is too much material." Both of these comments are justified, depending on the composition of the class and the way in which the manual is used. The manual was designed so foster parents participating in the class would have a permanent record of the material discussed and also so they could personalize the material, making it meaningful in terms of their agency's policy and the types of children they serve. Differences in discipline policies are especially critical in terms of the material in this manual. There is no way that the policies for each state and agency could be listed here and they might soon be outdated anyway.

Overall, this manual argues against any use of corporal punishment with children in foster care and stresses positive reinforcement of desired behaviors rather than heavy reliance on punishments of any kind. Obviously, the instructor will have little success trying to tell participants they should not use techniques that are allowed by their agency. However, emphasis on the importance of building the child's esteem and discipline as teaching may well convince many participants to move in that direction.

Instructors who concentrate on helping participants fill in all of the appropriate blank spaces may find the participants are still confused at the end of class and do not understand the material. The format of the class should be structured so the participants can discuss what each idea or term means, with opportunities to provide one another with concrete examples. Time should be allowed for value clarification activities and exercises which allow small groups to concentrate their skills on developing plans around specific behaviors. The class will have truly met the needs of foster parents only when they are able to utilize the material to improve their work with the children in their homes. In order for the material to be used as the basis for behavioral change, it will be necessary to allow plenty of time for repetition and utilization of concrete examples.

Instructors who find there is too much material may find they are too dependent on the workbook to provide class format. Certainly many participants will pressure the instructor to give them the answers. Participants who do not get most of the answers filled in will feel cheated. In order to make sure participants do not rush the instructor through the material to "get the answers" and to make sure participants who are not used to taking notes are assisted in getting material written down, the instructor may find it helpful to request that they not take notes until a section is finished. Then the whole class can go back and fill in the material they have found important. This procedure not only assures each participant has a complete manual at the end of the course, but serves as a nice review for each section.

The most important resource in any instructional situation is the teacher. All other materials and resources are useful to the extent the instructor is able to utilize them effectively. The following material is offered as one tool for the foster parent instructor's kit. Although we hope it will be useful, we would be disappointed to find instructors were relying on the manual to replace their own knowledge, techniques and assessment of class needs. Feel free to use the material selectively, in the order most appropriate for your teaching style and the needs of your class.

PREFACE

The author wishes to thank the many people who participated in the development of this manual. Over 250 people participated in the initial training sessions and provided valuable feedback and criticisms. Many of those people were able to offer courses in their own states and use their experience for further suggestions. Other people read the draft and contributed many valuable ideas. There is no way to thank the over three thousand people who each helped. Hopefully, many children in foster care will be the direct beneficiaries of their efforts.

Families who decide to care for other people's children in their own homes often find the task both more rewarding and more difficult than they imagined. The joy of helping a child, often one with many problems, grow and develop is hard for others to imagine. At the same time, the frustrations can be overwhelming. Unfortunatelly, those children, most needy of the love and descipline a foster family can provide, do not always respond as we would hope. This behavior can be disruptive of family life and cause problems for the child.

Foster families must find a way to encourage appropriate behaviors and discourage inappropriate behaviors. Even families who have raised many children may find the techniques that have worked in the past, do not work with this child. As a family seeks alternative ways to deal with a child, they may find that agency policies prohibit a disciplinary technique that they have successfully used with their own children.

This manual attempts to help foster families understand the reasons for agency policies on discipline and offers an opportunity to explore alternative disciplinary techniques. Good discipline is based on two principles: what works, and more importantly, what helps the child. Recognizing the concern foster families feel for each child and their desire to help each child to the fullest possible extent, the title of this manual - FOSTERING DISCIPLINE, reflects the need to examine those techniques which are appropriate to use with foster children. It also reflects our basic concern that we foster within each child the discipline he or she needs to meet the future as a sensitive responsible adult.

Because this workbook was developed for foster families who work with many different agencies, it does not include specific agency policy. Regulations dealing with discipline differ from state to state: It is imperative, for their own protection and for the protection of children in their care, that foster parents know the discipline policy under which they operate.

If your state has no family foster care discipline policy, you and the other members of the class may want to enlist the support of agency personnel and the foster parent association in establishing one.

Each child is different. Each responds differently. What works with one child won't necessarily work with others. However, the more alternatives we have, the more likely we will be able to find one that works with a particular child. This workbook was designed to help foster parents share with one another what has worked for them and provide a framework for approaching a discipline problem.

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INSTRUCTOR'S INTRODUCTION*

GENERAL PROCEDURES AND TECHNIQUES

Fostering Discipline is one part of a curriculum developed to prevent abuse in foster care. This manual is designed for foster parents. The other manual is for worker training and is entitled Preventing Abuse in Foster Care. Each manual is divided into ten sessions. Each of the sessions in Fostering Discipline has been used effectively at a weekly meeting of three hours duration. Parts of the manual could also be used at weekend workshops.

This manual helps foster parents ask and answer some basic questions about discipline and child management:

1) What do we mean by discipline and how is discipline different for children in foster care?

2) What is appropriate behavior for children at different stages of development and what are the appropriate ways to discipline children at each of the different stages?

3) What does a child learn from different forms of discipline and how does discipline affect a child's self esteem?

4) How do our values affect our reactions to children's behavior?

5) What are the long range consequences of certain behaviors and how can we minimize any negative outcomes?

6) What can we do about problem behaviors in the short run?

7) What are some of the reasons adults might abuse children and some of the behaviors adults find provocative?

8) What are some of the various forms of sexual abuse and exploitation of children and how can we protect children?

9) How do we encourage the maximum growth and develoment in children?

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* Prepared for Instructors and Instructors' Manuals by the Eastern Michigan University Foster Parent Training Project.

The following introductory material provides a general framework to use with foster parent education. It is designed to provide the instructor with an understanding of the classroom dynamics we have found successful in working with foster parents. Participants have had varying educational backgrounds, serve many different kinds of children, and work with all types of agencies. Although these procedures should constitute a helpful guide for the instructor, the greatest contribution of any teacher is his or her ability to evaluate the students and bring them what they most need. It is the instructor's creative use of materials, ability to use the strengths of the class, and warm support for each student's struggle to grow that are more effective in determining what is learned. Thus we see these materials as the basis from which the instructor starts, and to which he adds his own ideas, skills, and knowledge to meet the unique needs of his class.

TEACHING ADULTS

Although there are many common elements in the teacher's role regardless of the subject matter or the type of student, teaching adults outside of the traditional classroom or university setting is different. Typically, the adult student is in the classroom because he has a certain question that he hopes the class will help answer. His educational experience may be limited and sometimes he has had unpleasant classroom experiences. As a competent person used to making his own decisions and functioning well in his world, he may resent the implied subordination in the student's role.

An effective teacher of adults reassures the students that he recognizes and appreciates their competency. He gives them support for seeking help through attending classes. In addition, he emphasizes that learning can be fun and enjoying oneself in class may be the most effective way of learning. The student need not suffer to learn. Although new ideas and ways of doing things may sometimes make a student uncomfortable, the support of the instructor and his classmates aids him in his struggle for growth.

Busy adults are not in the classroom for the sheer joy of learning. They have taken the time to participate because they have specific problems. They typically want immediate answers and are not interested in "theory." The instructor of adults will find that he is usually most effective by starting with specific questions that his class brings. He uses these questions and their solutions to help the class build a more general framework rather than teaching them the general rules and hoping that they can deduce answers to their questions.

Unfortunately, many adults are skeptical of the value of "book" knowledge. They are accustomed to experiential learning and continuously question the credibility of material, especially if it appears to be so abstract as to be inapplicable to their daily lives. In teaching foster parents, the instructor's greatest resource is the foster parents in his class. Collectively, they have had tremendous experience in working with foster children and solving problems. Whenever possible, the instructor should encourage the class members to teach each other.

Typically, a class discussion starts with a foster parent describing a problematic situation. As this point, the instructor may reformulate the issues in line with the topics of the class. The other participants then offer solutions - often through describing similar situations they have encountered. If the similarities are not obvious, the instructor may wish to point them out to the class.

The various ways of dealing with the problem can then be evaluated. In most cases, some solutions will be eliminated as inappropriate, unfeasible, or damaging to the child, but the class will be left with two or three alternatives. Participants should be reminded that there is seldom one right way of parenting and encouraged to try the solution that is best suited to their style or with which they feel the most comfortable.

This process maximizes the participation of each student, assures the relevancy of the discussion to the immediate needs of the participants, and reassures them of their competency and ability to deal with various situations. It has its dangers, especially in dealing with emotionally laden issues. There is always a tendency for the class to use the time available to ventilate their feelings without constructively addressing the problem. The instructor must tolerate some airing of feelings, but strive to refocus the issues. If participants are continuously cut off, they will soon feel they should not contribute. Also, some participants will tend to ramble but eventually make a contribution. A tolerant and supportive instructor who guides the discussion and then summarizes the salient points assures that each person is receiving what he most needs.

Adult participants, like all students, often need to hear new material several times before accepting and incorporating it. We all need to hear the same thing said many times in many ways. The instructor need not fear repetition. Not only is it necessary for initial learning, but once something has been learned we usually find that each time we come back to it we discover new facets and new areas to which we can apply it. The organization of course content into a number of important points underscores commitment to learning through repetition. Typically, each point will surface or resurface thematically through the weeks of class discussion.

Teaching through group discussion is probably the hardest way to teach, but when successful, is the most rewarding in that the students not only learn more but learn in a way that is emotionally satisfying. They can use the material to effectively alter their lives. However, the good group leader does not simply rely on his students to contribute and hope for the best. He carefully prepares the ways in which he will be able to elicit the most meaningful contribution but is willing to alter his plans if a more fruitful approach emerges from group discussion. This manual supplies a structure for class discussion. The sensitive instructor will guide class discussion until participants are comfortable in completing the answers. Some of the ways the instructor can encourage meaningful group participation and techniques that have been successfully used with foster parents are discussed below.

THE PHYSICAL SETTING

Classrooms should be selected to comfortably hold twenty to twenty-five participants. In order to assure maximum participation, seats should be arranged either around one large table or in a circle unless special arrangements are suggested for a particular session. The instructor should be seated so that he is one of the participants. If there are two instructors, or if a special resource person is present, they should sit on opposite sides of the circle. Participants should be encouraged to address their remarks to the group rather than to the instructor.

If at all possible, there should be coffee available. If the site does not have coffee, one of the first tasks of the groups might be to decide if they would like to have coffee and how they should divide the responsibility for buying and preparing it. Some foster parent groups have established norms of bringing and sharing food, ranging from cookies to elaborate meals. If foster parents wish to bring food this can be a pleasant and acceptable manifestation of good feeling. However, refreshments are in no way a requirement and instructors should be careful to see that no foster parents feel pressured to contribute.

Smoking can be a problem. Unfortunately, smokers are most comfortable when allowed to indulge their habit but may seriously discomfort non-smokers in the group. The best solution is a well-ventilated room with smokers in one half of the circle and non-smokers in the other. If smoking is not allowed in the classroom, there should be a break.

If the participants are encouraged to get up to get coffee, leave the room when they like, and are allowed to smoke, it is not always necessary to have a break in a two-to-three hour session. Although the break gives people an opportunity to stretch and move about, it may be difficult to continue the discussion. This can be useful to the instructor if the class has lost the point or is rambling. After the break he can refocus class attention on the crucial issues or begin a new activity.

Overall, the instructor should do everything possible to assure that participants are comfortable. This includes being comfortable with each other. Providing each person with a name tag and involving them in the group discussion as early as possible serves to increase trainee comfort with one another.

ESTABLISHING GOOD PROCEDURES

The first class meeting is the crucial time for establishing the right atmosphere for optimal learning and establishing good procedure. It is very important that each and every person be made to feel comfortable and encouraged to participate. Since the first night of classes often requires some registration or people have difficulty in finding the building or parking, class may start a little late. The instructor should encourage everyone to arrive a little early so that they can start promptly in the future. It is sometimes helpful to add that people who are inadvertently delayed should come anyway and not miss the class.

The instructor's opening remarks should include the following points:

1. We are all here to learn because we want to help foster children, especially those in our own homes. A statement about the goals of the course is appropriate here.

2. Although we have an important and serious task, the process of learning can be fun. It need not be unpleasant to do us any good.

3. Learning to parent is not as simple as learning to sew or put a radio together. There are many good ways to parent and nobody has all the answers.

4. You as a class already have had a great deal of experience in parenting, most of it successful. It is important that we all share our experiences with each other.

If the instructor can honestly say that he hopes to learn as much from the class as they do from him, he should add this.

Unfolding: As soon as possible, the instructor will want to get each person to participate. The suggested technique for doing this is to have each member of the class introduce himself and describe his background. A few people object to this procedure, feeling it is a waste of time, so it is important to let the class know why they are going through this exercise. The instructor should point out:

1. Through the process of sharing information about ourselves we begin participating in the class.

2. As we listen to others, we find that we usually have something in common with everyone else and often a lot more than we had supposed.

3. The process of sharing helps to begin to focus on ourselves and experiences.

4. No one need tell anything that would make them feel uncomfortable or which he is reluctant to share with the group.

5. Each person should take not more than three to five minutes.

The instructor then lists the things that he hopes each will cover and starts the process by describing himself. The instructor's own unfolding always sets the tone and establishes a model for the foster parents' participation. If the instructor omits a point, others usually skip it; if the instructor adds a point, others often add it too. The list should include name, age, place of birth, where you went to school, where you work, how you decided to become involved with foster children, and present interests. Most instructors find it very useful to add one last topic that focuses the foster parents into a particular aspect of the course. See the specific suggestions included in the manual.

Selecting out the topics to be described by the participant is the instructor's first opportunity to use his creativity to help them focus on their own feelings about the topics of the course. His ability to respect each person's contribution provides the class with a model for how they will treat each other.

Recall: After everyone has introduced himself, it is useful to go back around the room asking what people recall about each person starting with his name. Many instructors find that both processes take up too much time for the first session. Waiting until the second session for recall not only allows time to introduce some content into the first session but helps people to loosen up and continue to participate at the beginning of the second session.

In order to encourage as much interaction as possible, the instructor may ask if anyone objects to the rest of the class having his name, address and telephone number. A list can be prepared and distributed to the class at the second meeting. This becomes especially useful if an emergency arises and class has to be cancelled or postponed. It also encourages the trainees to talk together outside of class and to collaborate on assignments.

TEACHING TECHNIQUES

Each instructor develops his own style. This manual has been used by several instructors. Each one used the material in a different way. Good teaching, like good parenting, does not consist of following a rigid set of rules. Rather each teacher develops techniques with which he feels comfortable, evaluating the usefulness of the technique on his ability to use it to stimulate his students to share relevant experiences around particular issues, evaluate the various alternatives available to them, and plan how to implement one of these in solving problems.

The instructor's main task then is to stimulate participation. However, as the trainees find support from the class for their experiences and feelings they may try to use class time to release many of their feelings. For many trainees this will be the first time they ever felt comfortable talking about their own feelings or ever had such a sympathetic audience.

The instructor can focus participation by:

1. Introducing the topic under discussion for the evening and relating it to previous topics
2. Asking questions that lead the participants to relate their own experiences to the topic to be discussed
3. Summarizing a participant's statements with emphasis on its relevancy for the topic
4. Reminding participants who talk on and on that they were making a specific point
5. If necessary, assuring a participant that although his contribution is interesting, the class has a specific topic they wish to discuss and they must return to that
6. Summarizing, or better yet, asking the class to summarize the way in which the topic for the evening was covered, and
7. Showing how points covered on a particular topic relate back to other topics or how they will be discussed further under a new topic heading.

In addition to group discussion, there are many other techniques that generate interest and increase participation. Most of these will not be new to the instructor but he can think about ways in which they might be used to present or explore particular topics. These techniques are presented in a general form below. Specific ideas are presented at the beginning of individual sessions.

Reading Materials: The manual assumes little outside reading except what is included for participants. There is a list of suggested reading at the end of the manual. Many foster parents have little time or inclination to read, but almost every class has some people who find reading pleasurable. Those who do outside reading should be encouraged to share with the class what they have read and to ask the class to evaluate how useful it might be in working with the children in their homes.

Participants may be asked to read materials to their families and share with the class the reaction of their spouse and child to the reading.

Assignments: As frequently as possible, participants should be given an explicit assignment to complete at home. This need not be lengthy, but may involve some writing or recording. (It is important to remember that some foster parents may have difficulty with reading or writing, and not to set up assignments which would induce failure or frustration due to lack of these skills). It should allow the participants to immediately put to use some of the things that they discussed in the class or prepare them for material that will be introduced next session. Observing a child, use of a new management technique with a child, calling their worker or a community resource for specific information, recording some specific behaviors, are all examples of such assignments. The instructor should assure that each participant receives feedback on all of his assignments, either through discussing it with the whole group, discussing it in a small group, or through receiving written comments from the instructor.

Role Playing: One of the best techniques for helping participants develop new ideas and to see things from a new vantage point is role playing. At the beginning, many participants may feel a little uncomfortable about "play acting" and it is often useful to start with a written script. With more experience, they may be given role assignments and a situation and allowed to spontaneously develop their own lines. The class may be broken into small groups and each group given a different situation to do for the whole class or each group may be given a different role and discuss how one of their members should act out his part. Playing a certain role may trigger fairly intense feelings. Part of the instructor's task is to help the participants articulate and handle the affect engendered by the role play, while constructively using the feelings to build empathy.

Brainstorming: This is a set of techniques used for creative problem solving or generating new ideas. The instructor provides the following ground rules for trainees:

There are no right or wrong answers; any idea, no matter how far fetched, is acceptable.

No verbal or non-verbal approval or disapproval is given for any ideas.

All ideas are visually listed, written on blackboard, newsprint, etc.

No idea is discarded for any reason.

Long pauses or silences are encouraged, as quiet engenders creativity.

A session runs from 20 minutes to half an hour to allow sufficient time.

It is useful to start with a "practice run" if participants are unfamiliar with brainstorming. They can be asked to "brainstorm" or list a number of items in a certain category (pets, colors, fruits, occupations, etc.). After a brief "warm up" of 5 or 10 minutes, using the brainstorming guidelines, participants are then asked to brainstorm the topic question (e.g., new ways of working with natural families.)

Following the brainstorming session participants may then select the most useful ideas generated. They may discuss how they could implement some of these ideas. It may be useful to sort the ideas into related categories and allow for small group discussion.

Games: There are many group games available that aid the participant in gaining a new perspective, finding out how different people are, or beginning to understand how difficult it is to understand even simple communications. Some of these are described in the manuals. They can be used in small groups or for the whole class.

Multi-Media: Movies, tapes, and slide presentations that can stimulate discussion on particular topics are sometimes available. If the instructor has access to a tape recorder or video-taping materials, these can be used successfully in allowing participants to critically observe their role playing or other activities and decide how they might want to change.

Small Groups: Dividing the class into small groups has been discussed above, but is also useful for more intensive discussion around specific topics. These topics will vary, and may be established by a number of criteria, which would include, but not be limited to, age of the foster children, legal status of the foster children, and level of functioning of a child with special needs. For example, in a class on Mental Retardation, small groups might be set up for foster parents of infants, pre-schoolers, school age children or teens, so that participants can relate concepts of emotional development to the specific age groups with which they are dealing. It may also be useful at times for small groups to all focus on the same topics, not for the purpose of dealing with a variety of specialized issues, but rather to afford all participants an opportunity for more intense involvement than is possible in large group discussion.

The instructor should make sure that each group has a specific topic and a clear idea of what they are trying to accomplish. To maintain the group process of the class as a whole and to focus the small group discussion, it is useful to ask each small group (or a designated member) to report back to the class as a whole on the important points of the small group discussion.

Implementation of Techniques: The above techniques are suggestions to increase the usefulness of the manual by maximizing the involvement and participation of the participants. The suggestions, along with the material provided in the manual, should be useful in helping the instructor develop an interesting and useful course. However, each instructor is responsible for evaluating the materials and using them in the way he feels is most beneficial to his class. The decisions he makes about materials and techniques, and his order of presentation should be based on his professional judgement as to the participants' needs and what will be most beneficial in helping them grow and learn. He should consider his own strengths and limitations and select those techniques with which he will be most comfortable, while feeling free to experiment with a variety of suggested techniques to enhance his own skills.

GENERAL THEMES

The materials presented in this manual and other materials have been developed by the staff of the Eastern Project and/or by the instructors teaching for the project. There has been no attempt to incorporate any particular approach to child development or child management. Rather we have selected from many works those ideas and techniques our experience working with foster parents suggests will be most helpful to them. Most instructors will probably be familiar with many of these ideas and will already be using them. Certain themes have emerged from our classes that cut across the lines of specific courses. Some are stressed more heavily in one course than in others. Our experience suggests that, although it is fairly easy to get agreement in these ideas, it is also easy to forget them and lapse into older habits. It is our hope that instructors will reread frequently the following points and attempt to stress them whenever appropriate in class discussion.

How We View the Child: It is important that the foster parent regards each child as a child first and as a foster child second. All children are more alike than different. If the child has a physical, emotional, or mental handicap, he is still a child with all the needs of a child. All children progress through a series of developmental stages with corresponding growth, stress, and challenges. Children in foster care have the same needs and follow the same patterns as other children. The particular traumas a child has experienced or his exceptional characteristics may mean that he will develop at a somewhat different pace than other children. Sometimes behavior typical of a particular stage becomes problematic especially if the child is chronologically older than one for whom this behavior is typical or if the behavior is more frequent or exaggerated than usual. To the extent that foster parents can view a child's behavior as more normal than abnormal even when it is disruptive, they will be more easily able to cope and to help the child move to more appropriate behaviors.

In addition to physical care and emotional support, the major job of the foster parent, indeed any parent, is to assess the child and help him move on to the next appropriate level. It is helpful if foster parents can view the goal of their work with the child not as "improvement" in his behavior but as progress and growth.

The long range goal for any child is to help him develop into, or come as close as possible to behaving as a capable, self-sufficient adult who feels good about himself. The foster parent works with the social worker and other professionals in assessing the child's needs and developing a plan to help the child progress toward independent adulthood.

Examining Our Own Feelings: Foster parents often have had little opportunity or motivation to examine their own feelings and attitudes. To the extent that their caseworker has been able to establish a relationship that allows him to work with them in these areas, stress is usually on their conflicts and problems.

It is more helpful to reassure foster parents their feelings are normal and experienced by most parents. Self-examination helps one to be more aware of one's values, moral codes, and behavioral standards, it does not necessarily mean one should change but allows one to sort out which standards are most important. It often allows one to become more tolerant of people who have different standards.

Many foster parents are concerned that if they are unable to teach the children in their care to behave properly, or stop them from behaving wrongly, they will grow up with serious problems or find themselves in serious trouble. They do not like to admit to themselves their reactions to certain behavior: They find themselves angry. They are embarrassed in front of their friends and neighbors. They are sometimes "turned off." They are afraid they are not coping and fear things will get completely out of control. They tend to blame themselves for the child's behavior. They often think that if only they were better foster parents, if they had done the job well, if they knew more about how to handle children, then these things wouldn't happen. Exploration of these feelings helps participants to discover that they are complicating the problem. The difficulties created by the child's problem are real and some forms of behavior can not be allowed to continue, but as participants come to grips with their own feelings, they are better able to help the child.

As foster parents come to realize that anger, frustration, and embarrassment are normal and that all foster parents, indeed all parents, have these feelings more often than they would like to admit, they can stop blaming themselves. Finally, they begin to realize they are not responsible for most of the problems of the child and the child's behavior does not mean that he does not like them. They are able to look at the success they are having, try to be satisfied that they are doing their best, and then look for alternative ways to handle the behavior.

Communications: Failure to effectively communicate clouds both professional and personal interactions. Failure to say exactly what one means not only conveys the wrong message to the listener but when repeated distorts the speaker's own perception of what he means. Foster parents often find it effective to rethink the messages they are, sometimes inadvertantly, sending the children. Learning to describe behavior rather than personalizing or labeling, and including positives as well as negative points often helps them to be more positive about the child.

There are certain rules that can be emphasized over and over again:

1. Although the child's behavior is disapproved, the child is worthwhile. (I don't like dirty hands, not I don't like you if you are dirty.)

2. Describe the behavior not personal characteristics. (You did not make your bed, not you are a slob.)

3. Be specific. (You took a dime, not you stole.)

4. Differentiate between feelings and behavior. (It is O.K. to be angry but you can't hit your brother.)

5. Try to state alternatives positively. (I like clean rooms, not I don't like dirty rooms.)

6. Try to let the child know what you want as specifically as possible.

7. Whenever possible, provide the child with acceptable alternative behavior rather than simply telling him to stop.

8. Remember the example the parent sets is much more important in shaping behavior than anything the parent says. (If you don't want a child to interrupt you, don't interrupt him.)

9. Try to reassure the child that you believe he is capable of growing, changing, and learning to conrol himself.

Policy: Since agency policy differs from one agency to another, the material in the manual does not discuss specific agency policies. When questions about policy arise in class the instructor can assign one or more participants the task of finding out what a particular agency's policies are. It is part of the foster parent's role responsibilities to know his own agency's policy.

The Foster Parent's Role: There is a growing discussion about the feasibility of redefining the role of the foster parents. Suggestions as to new role models include foster parents being viewed as:

1. Agency employees

2. Volunteer Service Providers

3. Independent Service Providers from whom the agency purchases service.

Although these models differ, there is agreement that the foster parent is the direct service provider to the child, a member of the team, rather than a quasi-client. The foster parent's job includes working with the caseworker, natural parents, if possible, and other professionals to assess and plan for the child. Foster parents are recognized as having special skills and knowledge whose input and participation in decision making is integral in providing good service information on a regular basis and abiding by agency policy. They should expect to receive the information they need to work with the child, be given adequate time to prepare the child for changes, and to be kept informed of any pending changes in the child's situation. The motivations of the foster parents for fostering, their personal feelings, and any problems they may have are irrelevant except when they manifest themselves in behavior that interferes with adequate job performance.

THE INSTRUCTOR'S ROLE IN MODELING TEAM BUILDING

As foster parents change their own role perceptions, and move towards defining themselves as valued members of a child-serving team, the impact of the instructor is a crucial factor in two areas. By affirming and validating the participant's expertise and newly acquired skills, the instructor can model and reinforce the team concept. Equally important, the instructor can impart, by example, many effective techniques of parenting.

The instructor, in most instances, represents "the professional world" to participating foster parents. Those instructors who actually are foster parents are often highly skilled and successful foster parents who have mastered the art of working in a team approach. Those who are professional child welfare workers, clinical psychologists, or special education teachers represent to the participants a part of the professional community with whom foster parents must interact for the good of the child. As they learn to interact with their instructors, they acquire skills which will later be invaluable in contacts with caseworkers, therapists, and teachers of their foster children. Learning to assert themselves, describe behaviors specifically and cooperate with instructors helps the foster parents to practice, in a safe place, behaviors which will later be used in encounters with other professionals. The instructor's respect, cooperation and support of foster parents as team members is instrumental in defining role expectations of trained foster parents, and reinforces the growing self-esteem of participants as valued members of the child serving team.

Similarly, the instructor models many effective techniques of parenting in his interaction with the class. Although teaching is only a quasi-authority position, a certain analogy can be drawn between the process of teaching and the process of parenting. In each situation, there are needs to be assessed and met, stages of development to be defined, and areas of growth to be encouraged. The student (whether in foster parent training or graduate school) looks to an instructor for guidance and support just as a child looks to a parent figure. By being a good "parent" to the class, encouraging growth rather than "obedience", using support rather than criticism, the instructor models the most effective ways of dealing with people, and demonstrates the project philosophy. Feedback from foster parents indicates that when "in a tight spot" they often stop to think what a favorite instructor might do or say in a similar situation.

Thus, while much of the participants' learning results from sharing of experience in group discussion and acquiring content material, the instructor should not overlook the process of identification and his impact in modeling growth-oriented philosophy as an integral component of foster parent training.

Specific instructions for the class you are about to teach are included with the material for each session. Additional class materials are available from the project entitled Seventeen Course Outlines. The project staff hopes you and the members will enjoy the experience and learn much from each other, that all of the participants in the class will be able to better serve children because of their participation.

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SESSION 1

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS DISCIPLINE?

INSTRUCTOR'S INTRODUCTION

Purpose:

1. Distribute manuals and name tags.
2. Introduce the goals of the course (page 1 of participant's manual).
3. Describe the format for learning -
    a. use of manual
    b. use of small group discussion and mutual sharing of experiences
    c. importance of examining our own values
4. Introduction of self and introduction of class participants.
5. Discuss meaning of confidentiality and need to maintain confidentiality in class.
6. Discuss various meanings of discipline and how children feel about discipline stressing the meaning of discipline as teaching.
7. Learn agency policy on discipline and discuss why discipline might have to be different for children in foster care.

Methods:

1. As class members arrive, welcome them and invite them to sit at one of the pre-arrenged tables.
2. When the group is assembled, review the goals for the course as they appear on page 1. Restate, rephrase, and repeat, and give examples in order to ensure the class members understand the goals.
3. Discuss the methods that will be used to maximize the learning experience:
    a. The manual will allow participants to write down new ideas or things they may want to remember about their own families.

    b. Class members will have the opportunity to participate in small group discussions and exercises as a way of sharing experiences and knowledge and of practicing new techniques.

    c. Recognizing our own values and feelings is an important first step in understanding and dealing with children.

4. Introduce yourself to the group using the following outline:
    a. Explain that you are going to demonstrate a way of self-introduction and you will ask others to do the same. Explain why this is useful.

    b. Repeat your name.

    c. Tell about your interest in working with children. If you are a parent be sure to mention this along with the ages of your children.

    d. Be brief - remember each of the class members will be following your model.

    e. Invite each class member in turn to tell about his or herself--using the same format as you did. Suggest that they may want to take notes about some of their new acquaintances.

5. After every one has introduced themselves, ask the class to summarize some of the things they have found interesting or which several members have in common. Acknowledge the rich experience and practical knowledge that they have to share.

    Discuss the possibility that different situations and experiences result in different points of view. Introduce the idea that all points of view will be permitted and discussed. Point out that each child is different and that something which works with one child doesn't always work with another, but the more ideas we have, the more things we can try until we find something that does work. Discuss the importance of confidentiality and that information learned in class should not be shared outside class.

6. Use the discussion questions to help participants concentrate on their own feelings about discipline, the differences between discipline and punishment and the importance of thinking about discipline as teaching. Although most people can easily accept that discipline includes both rewards and punishments, the majority quickly forget and when you ask them how they were disciplined as children, they talk only about punishment. Remind them that discipline is teaching, that we learn both because we are punished for inappropriate behavior and rewarded for appropriate behavior.

7. Since discipline policies change from state to state, and from agency to agency within a state, we can not include discipline policies here. You will have to learn the discipline policy for your state or agency. If your group includes foster parents from many different agencies, you may ask them to get a copy of their agency's policy for the next class. You should take responsibility for having a written copy of the state policy or guidelines. Ask the group what forms of discipline they are not allowed to use before you give them a written copy. Be sure to discuss why a policy might prohibit a given technique.

Discuss with the group why fostering other people's children might require different rules that raising your own. Encourage foster parents to read "What the Bible Says About Punishment" in Appendix A. Assign Appendix B, "Are We Raising Children or Adults," as reading for next Session.

SESSION 1

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS DISCIPLINE?

Welcome to the first session of Fostering Discipline. We will be working together to achieve the following goals:

GOALS

1. To understand the meaning of "discipline" and the ways in which different types of disciplinary techniques affect a child's self esteem.
2. To learn the ways in which child development affects a child's view of the world and the disciplinary techniques which are most appropriate at different stages of development.
3. To examine some of the child behaviors common to different developmental stages and develop understanding of why a child might behave this way.
4. To examine our own values to understand what bothers us most, why it bothers us and how we deal with these feelings.
5. To explore the long range consequences of specific behavior and how we can minimize negative outcomes.
6. To develop skills in assessing the conditions leading to certain behaviors and in determining which behaviors must be corrected immediately and which we can safely ignore.
7. To develop skills in establishing appropriate rules and communicating those rules effectively.
8. To develop a wide variety of alternative disciplinary techniques.
9. To explore some of the behaviors of children which are provocative and which might lure adults into abusive behaviors.
10. To understand the various adult behaviors which are considered abusive including physical harm, physical neglect, emotional abuse and sexual exploitation.
11. To understand the importance of encouraging independence.

To accomplish these goals we will be looking at a wide variety of behaviors - child behaviors and adult behaviors. The purpose of this course is not to make us feel bad about what we might have done in the past but rather to help us gain greater understanding of how we can best help children.

Since we will be together over the next several weeks, it is important that we learn a bit about each other so that we will be comfortable working together.

Here is a list of things I want to share with the group.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Here (and on the next page) are my notes about others in the group.

Why is getting to know others important?

1. We begin to share our values and beliefs and thus begin participating in the class.

2. We find out what we have in common with others.

3. We begin looking at ourselves and what we feel is important.

4. We let others know what is important about ourselves and what we think.

5.

When I think of the word discipline, I think of. . .

When I think of how I was disciplined as a child, I remember. . .

(22)

How did my parents usually punish me?

Did my parents ever reward me for doing well? How?

How did I feel when I was punished?

How did I feel when I was rewarded?

Most of us feel unhappy when we are punished. These feelings may include anger and resentment. Sometimes we feel confused and guilty. One thing people often say when recalling how they felt when being punished is, "I felt bad but I knew they loved me." or "I knew they did it for my own good."

Do you think this is true of children in foster care? Do they know that we love them? Do they understand that we are doing it for their own good?

Some may feel that way, but most have not had a good experience with adults. They know that they are with us on a temporary basis. Although some may come to trust us and believe we care, others never will.

Why might it be difficult for some foster children to feel that they are loved?

They may feel rejected by their parents.

They may have been moved from home to home many times.

They may feel they are to blame for being in foster care.

They may feel that no one could love them.

Webster's Dictionary* defines discipline as--

DISCIPLINE - (teaching, learning)

1. instruction
2. a subject that is taught: a field of study
3. training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character
4. punishment
5 a. control gained by enforcing obedience or order
   b. orderly or prescribed conduct or pattern of behavior
   c. self-control
6. a rule or system of rules governing conduct or activity
7. an orderly or regular pattern of behavior

What is most important in this definition for use in our work with children?

Teaching or instruction. We want to work with children until they have the ability to control their own behavior - until they have self-discipline.

"Disciple" comes from discipline and means one who submits oneself to a set of rules, and/or follows a teacher.

*SOURCE: Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, G & C Merriam Company; Springfield, Massachusetts: 1975, p. 325

What is meant by self discipline?

The ability to control one's behavior and to be guided by the rules one thinks are important.

How can we teach our children self discipline?

By letting them learn about the consequences of their behavior - letting them learn what happens and how people react when they behave in a certain way.

We can sometimes force children to do things because they fear the consequences of what will happen if they don't. We can also make children do things because they want a reward or want us to think well of them. What most of us really want, is to help children learn to do things because they feel they are right. Therefore, we must choose disciplinary techniques which will teach rather than those that simply control behavior.

At what age can we expect children to be self disciplined?

The earliest is probably about thirteen. Although children can learn to follow rules, it is not until early adolescence that they begin to internalize the rules. That is they begin to behave in certain ways because of what they feel to be right and wrong, not because someone will punish them or reward them.

Many foster parents have raised or cared for a large number of children. When we are working with foster children, we don't always have the same freedom to choose disciplinary techniques that we have with our own children. Why might this be?

The agency is responsible for the well being of the children and has the right to make rules.

Many foster children have been subjected to cruel or extreme punishments and will over-react to any punishment. Others will not respond to punishment unless it is extreme or abusive.

Since we can't know the entire background of the children in our homes, we must be very cautious.

Does this state have a disciplinary policy for family foster care homes?___________ What is it?

Does my agency have a policy?_________ What is it?

Some of the things often prohibited by state or agency policy are:

1. Corporal punishment.

2. Withholding food, clothing or other necessities.

3. Use of shame or humiliation.

4. Interruption of relationships with natural family members.

5. Restraint, time out or isolation.

6. Allowing other children to mete out punishment.

7. Positive techniques for discipline.

8. Threatening to have a child removed from home or calling worker.

What if I discipline my own children in ways that are prohibited by policy? Shouldn't I treat all of the children the same?

Different children need different things. If a child has diabetes, we have to treat him or her differently. Children in foster care may have different needs than our own children. Certainly they do not know me as well. They do not know if I will abuse them as they have been abused in the past.

Spanking has different meanings to different children. It will terrify some who have been physically abused. Other abused children will not react at all to a spanking as it will not compare to the pain they have already suffered. It will be very difficult for many children to believe that adults who hurt them can be trusted to care for them. Other children have already learned to associate pain and love, and to confuse the two in their minds. Both adults and children may find spanking sexually stimulating. This can have serious long range consequences including sado-masochistic adult sexual patterns.

My own children might also respond to the guidelines and policy set down for children in foster care. If foster children see me spank may own children, their experiences may lead them to believe I will abuse all of the children in my home.

See Appendix A for a foster parent's view of what the Bible says about punishment.

SESSION 2

DISCIPLINE AND HOW CHILDREN LEARN

INSTRUCTOR'S INTRODUCTION

Purpose:

1. Understand the meaning of permissive and authoritarian child rearing practices.
2. Understand the many ways in which children learn and the different kinds of consequences of behavior.
3. Explore when parents should intervene and set consequences rather than letting children learn from the natural consequences of their behavior.

Methods:

1. If this is the second session, you may want to spend some time on helping people to feel comfortable with each other. The recall exercixe will get people talking and remind them of the things they discovered about each other last session. (See page 5 of the Introduction).
2. After reminding the class of the many meanings of discipline, you may want to show the film or tape of "Spare the Rod". Ask the participants what each parent is trying to accomplish and how they are going about it.
3. Define authoritarian child rearing and permissive child rearing. Stress that permissive child rearing is not letting the child do whatever he or she wants.
4. Define natural, logical and artificial consequences. Many parents may find this confusing. The key difference between natural and logical is whether or not the parent has to get involved. The exercise on page 17 of the participant's manual should help in clarifying natural consequences.
5. You may want to go back over the list after you have answered the questions on page 18 of the participant's manual, and discuss which of the natural consequences people in the group would be willing to allow children to experience. The age and developmental stage of the child may be important considerations here.

SESSION 2

DISCIPLINE AND HOW CHILDREN LEARN

During our last session we defined discipline as:

1. teaching, instruction

2. punishment

3. regular pattern of behavior

4. training that corrects or molds the character

5. a subject that is taught

6. a system of values

7. self-control

We saw that discipline could be either imposed from outside - to control behavior, or that discipline could constitute teaching the child.

During this session we are going to look at two different approaches to discipline often called "authoritarian: and "permissive."

Authoritarian discipline is:

> Discipline that is focused on controlling behavior.
> It is not necessarily harsh but emphasizes that children
> should do as adults tell them.

Permissive discipline is:

Letting children learn from the consequences of their behavior within the limits set by their parents. It is not letting children do what ever they want. Rather is stresses teaching children the "whys", giving them choices and helping them develop a sense of responsibility consistent with their stage of development.

Few parents today are at either extreme of authoritarian or permissive discipline but fall somewhere in between. Young children need more controls than older children do.
They can't foresee what is likely to happen.
What might be the result of overly authoritarian child rearing practices?

Either a child, and eventually an adult, who is very conforming and afraid to break rules; or rebellion.

What might be the result of overly permissive child rearing practices?

- Children, eventually adults, who know no limits - think they can do whatever they want. Some children will go to greater and greater extremes, hoping someone will eventually care enough to set limits.

There are many ways to teach a child.

1. **Giving verbal instructions:**

   We teach by explaining, listing rules, discussing. This is what most of us think of as teaching, but it is only one way.

2. **Demonstrating and modeling behavior:**

   Children often pay more attention to what we do rather than what we say. Young children often attempt to copy what they see adults or older children do.

3. **Experiencing the negative consequences of inappropriate behavior:**

   When we find that our behavior will cause us discomfort, we usually avoid that behavior. Some children have had very little attention and will misbehave in order to get some attention, even if it is punishment.

4. **Experiencing the positive consequences of appropriate behavior:**

   This is one of the most effective ways of teaching. Virtually everyone will do things that bring about rewards, if the demands on them are not too great, if they have not been led to feel that the rewards will bring a more severe punishment and if they feel they are deserving of the rewards.

5. **Allowing a child to experiment and find out for his or herself.**

   Experimentation and trying out new behaviors provides the child an opportunity to find out, or think through, what happens in different kinds of situations. It fosters creativity and responsibility as long as the situations are in line with the child's capabilities.

Rudolph Driekurs has developed a technique of discipline designed to help children learn. He talks about:

1. NATURAL CONSEQUENCES:

   These are the things that will happen without the parent doing anything. They may be other people responding (e.g., teaches making a child stay in because he didn't do his homework) or the rules of nature (e.g., burning your fingers if you are not careful with matches). Consequences may also be rewards (e.g., feeling good when you eat all of your dinner.)

2. LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES:

   These are the things parents do or insist upon, but they are connected to the behavior the parent is trying to change (e.g., if you don't put your bike in the garage, you may not ride it tomorrow. If you eat all of your vegetables, you may have a scoop of ice cream.)

3. ARTIFICIAL CONSEQUENCES:

   These have no connection with behavior (e.g., If you don't get in bed by 9 o'clock, you won't get any allowance this week.)

NOTE: The definitions above emphasize the role of parents in setting consequences. This differs from other definitions which emphasize nature vs. social. These definitions also look at consequences which may be positive.

What are the natural consequences of some of the following behaviors:

1. **Staying up late:**

   Being tired; but enjoying late hours.

2. **Lighting matches:**

   Burning self or something; seeing flames, excitement.

3. **Crossing the street:**

   Getting hit by car; getting to where you want to go.

4. **Leaving bike out:**

   Having it rust or stolen; saving time.

5. **Refusing to share your toys:**

   Others may refuse to play with you or share their toys; but you may avoid having others monopolize toys or abuse them.

6. **Telling lies to avoid punishment:**

   Worry about getting caught in the lie, people stop trusting you; but you may avoid punishment.

7. **Shoplifting:**

   Being caught, embarrassed, possible prosecution; get things you want.

8. **Smashing own toy:**

   Toy is broken; but you have expressed your frustation.

9. **Calling a person names:**

   People get angry; you express anger, frustration.

10. **Not doing your homework:**

    Teacher sets consequences, failure, extra work in school; extra time instead of homework.

11. **Not hanging up clothes:**

    Room is messy, clothes are wrinkled; saves time, work.

12. **Physically fighting with other children:**

    Hurting child or getting hurt; vent anger, earn reputation.

13. **Looking at dirty pictures:**

    Embarrassment or misinformation; arousal, satisfy curiosity.

14. **Making up stories about birth family:**

    Embarrassment, guilt, loss of trust; escape prying questions; use fantasy to feel better about self.

One way to teach children is to let them experience or learn from the natural consequences of their behavior. REMEMBER: Children can only learn from the natural consequences of their behavior if we don't interfere. If we feed a child after dinner, he or she won't feel hungry.

Some times it is difficult to not interfere. Why might we not want to let children experience the natural consequences of their behavior?

1. Too dangerous or harmful; e.g., matches

2. May take too long; e.g., bike rusting

3. Child may not care; e.g., messy room

4. Other people's reactions may damage child's self-esteem; e.g., laughing at birth family

When natural consequences are harmful or too far in the future to be effective, we can use logical consequences. These consequences usually make more sense to children because they can connect them to the behavior. What might be a logical consequence for leaving your bike out:

Not riding it the next day.

For running in the street:

Having to go inside or sit on the porch for fifteen minutes

Playing with matches:

Difficult unless use of matches is part of a privilege. Perhaps if child is taught to use matches appropriately (e.g., camp fires, candles), this privilege may be removed.

Instructor's Note: Point out that teaching may take investment of time but is easier in the long run because once child has learned, he or she will need less monitoring. Until child can be trusted to obey safety rules, monitoring is necessary.

SESSION 3

UNDERSTANDING WHY CHILDREN BEHAVE THE WAY THEY DO

INSTRUCTOR'S INTRODUCTION

Purpose:

1. To identify the behaviors which are most bothersome or which are of greatest concern to the group.
2. To learn the four questions foster parents can use to understand and manage behavior.
3. To explore the reasons children behave in certain ways and specifically why the experiences of children in foster care may lead to specific behaviors.
4. To examine our own values and feelings about certain behaviors.
5. To look at the long range consequences of behavior and determine how our reactions to the behavior might affect the child.
6. To also examine some of the things that children fail to do and the reasons they fail to do what we want and to explore the long range consequences for children if they fail to do some of these things.
7. Practice answering the four questions for a variety of behaviors.

Methods:

1. Use the chalkboard or newsprint to list all of the behaviors the group suggests are bothersome. Provide examples of these behaviors from your own experience and encourage group members to do the same. Do not evaluate why the behaviors are bothersome.
2. Repeat the four questions and explain what they mean. Stress that there is always a reason for behavior even if we can't always determine what it is.
3. Brainstorm all of the reasons for a particular behavior. The workbook uses lying because so many foster parents think this is a critical area. If the foster parents in your group want to use a different behavior, that is fine. There will probably be a lot of overlap. After you have finished, review why children in foster care may have special reasons to behave in this way.
4. Have the foster parents list all of the reasons they can think of for why this behavior bothers them. Give support for self-centered reasons as well as altruistic reasons.

5. Explore the long range consequences of whatever behavior the group has selected. Stress the commonness of behaviors and the importance of reactions to behaviors as the determinants of long range consequences.

6. Repeat the process with behaviors that foster parents would like to encourage but which are sometimes difficult to get children to do. First, list all of the reasons why children might not do some of the things we would like them to do. Then discuss why it bothers us. Finally, look at the range of behaviors on page 28 of the participant's manual and discuss the long range consequences. Emphasize that many of these behaviors have relatively few long range consequences.

7. Divide the group into small groups and have each group take a specific behavior about which they are concerned. Ask them to answer the three questions in their manual. When they are finished, ask each group to report back on what they have discussed by providing all of the answers to the three questions. The manual includes room for the answers to the three questions for four different behaviors.

   Point out that they have learned how to answer the first three questions but that they still will want to learn how to answer the fourth question, "What do we do about it in the short run?" This is the topic for the next session.

   Ask group to read Appendix C for the next session.

   NOTE: Instructor may wish to review material in Handling Lying and Dishonest Behaviors and Handling Destructive Behavior, both by Patricia Ryan.

SESSION 3

UNDERSTANDING WHY CHILDREN BEHAVE THE WAY THEY DO

We have been discussing various ways to handle children's behavior. Usually this means we want to change behaviors: to stop children from doing something we don't like, or to get them to do something we want them to do. Let's start with some of the things we would like to stop children from doing. What are some of the things that bother us most?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

In dealing with children's behavior, we have found it useful to answer four questions:

1. Why might the child be behaving this way?

   There is always a reason for behavior, even if it is difficult to understand. Understanding why a child behaves in a certain way will make it easier to decide how to handle it.

2. Why does it bother me?

   If I recognize my own feelings, this may give me a clue as to why the child behaves this way. It may also help me set priorities.

3. What are the long range consequences?

   This is a major concern. Will this behavior be a pattern? Will it become more extreme? Is it likely to disappear on its own?

4. What can I do in the short run?

   Regardless of the answers to the other questions, some behaviors have to be dealt with and controlled right away.

During this session we are going to look at a variety of behaviors and try to answer the first three questions. Next session we will deal with the fourth question.

Let's start our discussion with lying. Although many children behave this way on occasion, their reasons for doing so are not always the same.

Although the behaviors of others often seems to be without reason, that is never true. There is always a reason for people behaving the way they do -- even if it is difficult to figure it out.

In order to help children change their behavior, it is often useful to know why they behave that way. Let's list some of the reasons children might LIE.

1. Developmental: hasn't yet learned to tell the difference between truth and non-truth, fantasy.
2. Reality testing: to find out what is real by testing other people's reactions.
3. Denial: to rid self of painful feelings, memories.
4. Wish fulfillment: to try and make things better.
5. Fantasy: day dreams and imagined events become real.
6. Protection: to escape consequences of own behavior, or to protect another person.
7. Modeling: copying the example of other people, especially important adults.
8. Recognition: to enhance reputation or to be part of a group.
9. Power: as a means of controlling others or getting revenge.
10. Negative attention: it is better to have someone angry at you than not have any attention at all.

Foster children might behave this way for any of these reasons. Are there any other reasons why children in foster might behave this way?

1. Separation trauma (anger)

   Children in foster care have usually experienced separation. They may feel angry and lie to get back at people, or to attempt to gain some kind of control over their situation. They may feel if they are bad enough they will be sent away before they become too involved with the family or that they will be sent back to their birth family.

2. Poor modeling in the past

   The values of the birth family or other people the child has lived with in the past may be very different. They may have felt the need to lie to protect themselves and in some cases encouraged the child to lie.

3. Developmental lag

   Children who have experienced a great deal of trauma may have developed hopes and wishes about what has happened and what will happen. They may find their lives have been so chaotic, it is difficult to separate the fantasy from the reality.

4. Attention getting (self-esteem)

   Children may not feel they are worthwhile or that people could like them the way they are. Therefore, they resort to lying to enhance self. Even if they get into trouble, they may feel negative attention is better than nothing.

Why does this behavior bother me?

1. Assaults my moral code or ethical system.
2. Disrupts relationship with child.
3. Causes embarrassment with school, neighbors and others.
4. Worry about contagion with other children.
5. Worry about child growing up to lie in most relationships.
6. Fear loss of control over child or situation.
7. Feel failure. Whey does child feel it is necessary to lie?
8. Wonder if lying will lead to other forms of dishonesty and possibly legal problems.
9.
10.

Often we are afraid that if children are allowed to misbehave, they will continue misbehavior and it will get worse as they get older?

Thinking about this behavior, is this something that is likely to continue and/or get worse as a child grows up?

It depends on how people react. If child gets reinforcement or if child is labeled as "liar", it may continue and become exaggerated.

Do I know adults who behave this way?

Most of us know adults who seem to find it easier to lie than to tell the truth.

What are the consequences for adults who behave this way?

They often have trouble in relationships. They sometimes spend a great deal of energy in covering up their lies.

Do most children behave this way occasionally?

Yes. How many people can honestly claim they have never lied?

Why is it that although most people experiment with inappropriate behaviors at some time in their lives, only some have long range problems?

Behaviors that are rewarding are maintained especially if we don't learn alternatives. Labeling may also encourage or even reinforce continuation of inappropriate behaviors.

What are some of the things children don't do that we would like them to do?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

What are some of the reasons why children don't do the things we want?

1. Motivation: it may not be important to the child.

2. Knowledge and skills: the child may not know how to go about it.

3. Planning: the child may intend to do it but never get around to it.

4. Anger: the child may use this as an expression of anger or revenge.

5. Control: failure to respond is one of the few ways the child can exert control on the situation.

6. Attention: the child may feel negative attention is better than no attention.

7. Lack of self-esteem: the child may feel unable to succeed and would rather get into trouble than fail.

8. Fear of situation: this activity may have led to trauma in the past; punishment, hurt, humiliation.

9. Fear of failure: children sometimes feel accomplishment would put them in situations where too much would be expected of them and they couldn't live up to it.

10. Identification with birth parents: child may feel bad behavior would make them different from birth family or bring them closer to the foster family.

Why does it bother me when children, don't clean their rooms **?**

1. Assaults value system in terms of cleanliness and taking care of property.

2. Makes extra work, disrupts schedule.

3. Leads to nagging, screaming or other behaviors I don't like in myself.

4. Wonder if child will ever learn to take care of self or to take responsibility.

5. Embarrassing if other people see the mess.

6. Feel sense of failure.

7. Worry if other children will feel they don't have to do this task.

8. Feel loss of control.

9. Constant hasseling disrupts relationship with child and makes it difficult to work on more important issues.

10. The problem with the child disrupts relationship with my spouse or with the other children.

What are the long range consequences of children if they don't:

A. **Wash and keep clean:**
In extreme cases child might develop skin problems or infections. Others may avoid them or make fun of them.

B. **Dress appropriately:**
Other people make fun of them. Our clothes give messages which may be misinterpreted.

C. **Clean their rooms:**
May have difficulty finding what they want.

D. **Do their homework:**
Fail in school.

E. **Listen and do what I say:**
Depends on what I ask. As adults they my rebel against authority. In the long run, they have to live with consequences.

F. **Share their toys:**
Others may refuse to play with them.

G. **Eat properly:**
Health problems.

H. **Go to bed on time:**
Not enough sleep or oversleep, missing important events.

I. **Obey safety rules:**
Serious accident.

J. **Go to school regularly:**
Fail in school. Possible legal consequences.

K. **Exercise:**
Health problems.

Let's look at some typical behaviors and answer the first three questions.

BEHAVIOR ________________________________

Why might children behave this way?

Why does it bother me?

What are the long range consequences?

BEHAVIOR ____________________

Why might children behave this way?

Why does it bother me?

What are the long range consequences?

BEHAVIOR ________________________________

Why might children behave this way?

Why does it bother me?

What are the long range consequences?

BEHAVIOR ______________________________

Why might children behave this way?

Why does it bother me?

What are the long range consequences?

SESSION 4

HANDLING BEHAVIOR IN THE SHORT RUN: SPECIFYING AND ASSESSING BEHAVIOR AND DEVELOPMENT

INSTRUCTOR'S INTRODUCTION

Purpose:

1. To list and understand the steps in making a plan for managing behavior.
2. To practice specifying behaviors.
3. To examine the things we know about child development as a basis for assessing child behavior.
4. To explore some of the reasons why children in foster care may have developmental lags.
5. To begin to understand when it is important to get outside help for a child.

Methods:

1. Go over each step in handling behavior in the short run. Give an example and show why this is important. Do not expect the group to remember these steps at this point.
2. Use the exercise on page 35 to practice specifying behavior. Give examples of minor and serious behaviors that might fall under each label.
3. Review the dimensions of development and what each means. Give a mini-lecture on development using the outline in the participant's manual. Either review the material in Appendix C or break into small groups and have each group report on a particular stage.
4. Stress that at each stage a child is torn between wanting greater independence and wanting the security of the family. Discuss ways in which the experiences that lead a child to foster care may make this difficult.
5. Help the group determine the types of behavior that are indicative of a serious problem and discuss their personal experiences using different resources.

Note: Instructors may want to review material in Emotional Development by Emily Jean McFadden.

SESSION 4

HANDLING BEHAVIOR IN THE SHORT RUN: SPECIFYING AND ASSESSING BEHAVIOR AND DEVELOPMENT

We have spent the last few sessions talking about behavior and the reasons children might behave, or fail to behave, in a certain way. Now we are going to work on ways to handle the problem in the short run. This involves seven steps.

1. **Specifying the Behavior to be Changed:**

   We often use a general term that may mean different things to different people. By stealing do we mean taking pennies off of the dresser or taking merchandise from a store without paying for it?

2. **Assessing the Reasons for the Behavior:**

   a. **Is it typical of a certain developmental stage?**

      Often, bothersome behaviors are typical and correct themselves with support and guidance.

   b. **When does the behavior occur?**
      Is there a time of day or specific kind of situation that triggers behavior or failure to do certain things.

   c. **Why might children in general behave this way?**
      Why might this particular child behave this way?

      Ask the question about children in general and more specifically in terms of a particular child and when the behavior occurs.

3. **Setting Priorities:**

   a. **Why does it bother me?**

      Is it basically my problem or a problem of the child?
      Is this an area that will cause me to lose control?

   b. **Is it dangerous, destructive or illegal?**

      If so, it must be a high priority area.

   c. **What are the long range consequences?**

      And how will my handling it affect the child in the long run?

   d. **Is it part of normal development?**

      Does this give me some ideas about how important it is to intervene?

4. **Changing the Situation:**

   a. **Give more attention.**

      If a certain behavior is a bid for attention maybe I can find other ways of giving extra attention.

   b. **Change schedule.**

      Would things be easier if we had more time, tried to do this at a different time?

   c. **Prepare in advance.**
      Could I do something to deflect the situation before it occurs.

5. **Setting Rules:**
   Once I am certain that I wish to work on this area, I must communicate expectations and consequences clearly and specifically. I should be able to explain why the rule is necessary.

6. **Determining Consequences:**

   a. **Negative consequences.**
      These should be short and immediate and whenever possible logically connected to the behavior.

   b. **Positive consequences.**
      I must remember to reward behavior I think is appropriate or a step in the right direction.

7. **Carrying Through:**
   I must make sure I can consistently monitor the behavior and carry through in providing consequences and rewards. This may mean going back through the steps above. I should always think about the consequences and if it is realistic to insist upon them. What will they teach the child?

During the next few sessions we will be exploring what each of these means. Let's start with specifying behaviors.

SPECIFYING BEHAVIOR

The first step in planning to help a child around a particular behavior is to specify the behavior. What do each of the following mean and how can we make them more specific?

Stealing:

Specifically: Taking or using things that don't belong to you without getting permission.

Cleaning your room:

Specifically: Make your bed, hang up your clothes or put in hamper, pick up everything on floor and put in box.

Being good:

Specifically: Doing what I want you to do like sitting still and not talking. This may be too vague to even be used.

Fighting:

Specifically: Hitting, kicking, punching or wrestling.

Bathing:

Specifically: In tub or shower, soap and rinse all over including face and ears.

Coming home on time:

Specifically: Being in the house at 4:30.

Talking back:

Specifically: Saying you won't do something or that you don't have to do something. What is the difference between expressing feelings or opinions, and behavior?

ASSESSING THE REASONS FOR BEHAVIOR

Determining the reasons for a child's behavior is important for several reasons. It helps understand where the child is coming from. It helps us determine how important it is to change the behavior. It helps us understand how we might go aout changing the behavior.

We must first decide if a child's behavior is typical of his or her age or level of development.

When we talk about development, we are recognizing that children are different as different stages of their life. Sometimes these differences are very obvious as in the child's size. We can easily see differences from year to year. Other areas are much less obvious.

Development can be divided into five areas:

1. Physical development:

   Includes physical growth, development of gross and fine motor skills, changes in body and sexual maturation.

2. Intellectual (cognitive) development:

   Includes learning to categorize, label, development of language, and development of abstract thinking.

3. Emotional development:

   Learning to identify and label feelings, differentiate feelings from behavior and development of self-concept.

4. Social development:

   Learning how others are likely to react, taking the role of the other person, and the development of empathy.

5. Moral (conscience) development:

   Learning about rules, fairness, right from wrong, and eventually developing and internalizing responsible behavior for the good of the whole group.

Throughout the life cycle each human being moves through stages of development. Part of the growth is genetically or biologically determined. An acorn is programmed to become an oak, not a maple. Another part depends on the nutrients in the environment. An acorn will take root in good soil and grow if there are the right amounts of sun, rain and minerals in the soil.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

As we think about our own lives, or the children we have known, we realize that people are always growing and changing. We are also aware that individuals move from stage to stage of development at different paces, at different ages, and may be different from each other in the length of time they spend at a certain stage or how far they progress.

There are a variety of reasons for the differences between people and the ways they grow and develop:

> Biological, genetic or physical differences of an individual influence size, appearance, health, life expectancy, stamina.
>
> The environment influences growth, with factors such as nutrition, educational opportunity, financial resources, cultural heritage, expectations of the family, the way the individual is treated by others.
>
> The personality of an individual--the sense of self worth, the ability to respond to others, the sense of trust or mistrust of the world, the ability to accomplish tasks and reach goals--influences the way a person grows and develops throughout life.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

Several things to remember about development are:

1. The stages are orderly and sequential and cannot be skipped.
2. As individuals, children move through the same general stages at their own pace and in an unique way.
3. Physical, intellectual, emotional, social and moral development go together.
4. It is possible to become stuck at any stage.
5. Trauma can slow down progression.
6. "Abnormal" behavior is often an exaggeration of "typical" behavior.

7. The child's developmental level rather than his chronological age is the key to understanding his behavior.

8. Growth and development is always our goal--not control. We are raising adults not children.

A child's developing sense of self is expressed in ways that may seem problematic:

defiance

testing limits

refusing to share

fighting over possessions

interrupting

bragging

pushing to be the center of attention

exploring own body

looking at or touching another's body

copying peers

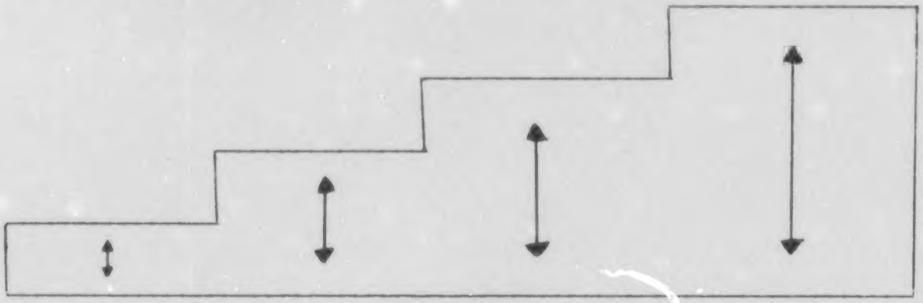
trying out "adult" behaviors

refusing to follow rules

showing off body

At the same time these behaviors may be important steps in growing toward independence. The material in Appendix C provides a brief summary of typical behaviors at different stages.

We can think of development as a series of stages or stairs.



Foundation of Good Parenting

As a child moves to a new level, it becomes necessary to test the relationship with parents and family. At each stage the arrow represents the need of the child to "push" toward greater independence but also the pull to remain secure with parents and family.

This foundation can be broken through death, divorce or other family problems. When this happens children will have problems. They may fall back to an earlier stage or they may exaggerate the breaking away behaviors.

Children in foster care have typically had life experiences that have broken the foundation. Our job as foster parents is to help patch up the foundation so the child can continue to grow and develop into an independent adult.

Why might children in foster care have more developmental problems or be likely to lag behind other children?

1. They may have been deprived or neglected so they did not have the opportunity to learn what other children typically do at a certain age.

2. They may have physical problems, sometimes stemming from neglect or abuse, which have restricted their opportunities.

3. The process of being removed from their birth families or from another home may have interrupted their development.

4. They may have been exposed to behaviors that restricted their development or failed to provide them with appropriate models- e.g., temper tantrums.

5. Trauma often leads to regression to an earlier stage of development, e.g., bed wetting.

6. They may have been punished for behaviors which would have facilitated development.

7. Moving may have exposed them to conflicting expectations.

8.

9.

10.

How do I know if a child's behavior is a serious problem and I should seek help?

Whenever a child's behavior is dangerous, destructive, or illegal, I must control it or get help. When a child's behavior interferes with participation in other learning experiences necessary for development, I should get help. When a child seems to be stuck at the same stage and shows no progress, I should get help. Remember that a child who is withdrawn, even if very good and not disruptive, may need help as much, or more than the disruptive child. It is always useful to discuss the child's progress with the worker and to get an evaluation when I have concerns. Often the child's teacher or other adults who work with the child can provide important information.

Where do I get help?

The agency staff knows of resources available to children in foster care. The first step should be to discuss the problem with the worker. Other sources are the school social worker and community mental health clinics.

SESSION 5

HANDLING BEHAVIOR IN THE SHORT RUN: IDENTIFYING AND CHANGING PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIORS

INSTRUCTOR'S INTRODUCTION

Purpose:

1. Review steps for handling behavior in the short run.
2. Examine some of the times when problematic behavior is likely to occur.
3. Review the reasons for children's behavior.
4. Discuss how to set priorities for behavioral change.
5. Discuss ways in which we can modify the situation in order to change behavior.
6. Examine behaviors of particular children in terms of appropriate discipline planning.

Methods:

1. Review the steps in handling behavior in the short run. Do not expect the participants to have learned all the steps at this point.
2. Have participants list and discuss the times of day or events that lead to behaviors they are unhappy about or when they can not get a child to do something they want.
3. Review the reasons children are likely to misbehave or fail to do what is expected of them. Point out that knowledge of developmental level, situations which lead to behavior and reasons for behavior give us good clues as to what we might do to change behavior.
4. Discuss reasons why it is difficult to work on all behaviors at once. Use red light, yellow light and green light as a way of working on behaviors and deciding what is most important to concentrate on first. Many parents, especially those who are very controlling will tend to have very few green light behaviors for children of any age. There are usually some people in every group who are more tolerant. Encourage their questioning of why parents have to become involved in so many behaviors. Keep asking the class what difference it is likely to make if children are allowed some of the bothersome behaviors. Support their feelings of not liking the behavior while helping them see it may still not be important at this point.

5. Discuss ways in which we can modify the situation to head off certain behaviors. Small groups may be useful here, with each group taking a different situation and reporting back to class the ways in which the situation might be modified.

6. Divide the class into groups around behaviors or a specific aged child and have them go through the steps we have covered so far. There is some space on page 52 and 53 of the participant's manual for this exercise. This may be a homework exercise for the class to bring back to the next session.

SESSION 5

HANDLING BEHAVIOR IN THE SHORT RUN: IDENTIFYING AND CHANGING PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIORS

Last session we listed seven steps to changing behavior. These were:

1. Specifying the behavior to be changed
2. Assessing the reasons for behavior
3. Setting priorities
4. Changing the situation
5. Setting rules
6. Determining consequences
7. Carrying through

We then worked on ways to assess behaviors and concentrated on the developmental stages and what they mean for understanding behavior.

It is important to remember that the stages are orderly, in sequence, and cannot be skipped. Children must grow through one stage before they move on to another. It is possible that a child may lag in some areas of development, or regress under stress. Each child grows at his or her own pace.

The key to understanding children's behavior is their developmental level, not their chronological age. Behavior makes more sense in terms of the stage rather than the age. Behaviors that may seem inappropriate at a certain age, may fit with a child's stage.

As foster parents, our main goal is to help children grow and develop. Although we may have immediate concerns about controlling or handling dangerous or destructive behavior, we keep in mind that the long term goal is growth of the child, not control. Often, our patience, our understanding of the stage the child is moving through, and the passage of time will lead to the child's mastery of problematic behaviors. Our positive expectation--that the behavior and stage will pass, and that the child will grow is crucial to the child's development and our own peace of mind.

Some of the things we can do to help a child grow are:

1. Reward them for appropriate behavior or behavior at the next stage.

2. Ignore inappropriate behavior whenever possible.

3. Provide them with support and security.

4. Express our belief that they will grow.

5. Express our commitment of sticking with the child (if we can honestly do this).

Another way to assess why a child behaves in a certain way is to keep track of when the behavior occurs. When are some of the times of day or situations when children are most likely to be disruptive?

1. Bedtimes

2. Mealtimes

3. Early morning

4. When we have company

5. When we're in a hurry

6. Holidays

7. When another child is getting special attention

8. Before or after a visit with birth parents

9. When sick, hungry, tired

10.

11.

Now we can review some of the reasons children either do things we don't like or refuse to do things we want them to. These reasons are:

1. Attention getting

2. Immaturity - Doesn't know how or doesn't understand concepts

3. Poor modeling in the past

4. Attempt to control environment

5. To gain acceptance with peers

6. Anger

7. Poor self-esteem

8. Lack of motivation

9. Fears

10. Avoidance of punishment

11.

SETTING PRIORITIES

When children have many behaviors that are bothersome it is difficult to work on all of them at once. Why?

1. Too many things are too difficult to carry through on. Some things get lost and parent can't carry through.

2. The child may think all are equally important: that picking up your jacket is just as important as not running in the street

3. It is difficult to see improvement. No matter what is getting better there is still so much wrong.

How might we set priorities?

Things that are dangerous, destructive or illegal have first priority. Second are behaviors that interfere with growth and development. Third are those things which have serious long range consequences. Fourth are those that are likely to make me at a point lose control. All of these are critical and order does not indicate priority. If too many behaviors are high priority, I may not be able to foster this child.

Red light behavior is?

Anything that is dangerous, destructive, or illegal. Behavior must be stopped.

Yellow light behavior is:

Things that have negative consequences under some circumstances.

Green light behavior is:

Behaviors where the child can learn from the natural consequences.

With red light behavior the parents' job is to:

Stop. Control. Get outside help if necessary.

With yellow light behavior the parents' job is to:

Point out consequences. Set limits or conditions. Guide.

With green light behavior the parents' job is to:

Ignore. Can point out consequences, feelings or opinions.

In order to determine if a behavior is red light, yellow light, or green light we have to take into consideration the age or developmental stage of the child, the community we live in and the short range consequences. For instance in most communities crossing the street would be red light behavior for a two year old, yellow light behavior for a five year old and green light for a twelve year old.

Lets look at some behaviors and decide if they are red, yellow or green light behavior; and how age or developmental stage might enter into it.

1. Staying up late: yellow light for young children
   green light for adolescents if they get up on time
2. Lighting matches: yellow light depending on age and circumstances
3. Crossing the street: yellow light depending on age and ability to follow safety rules
4. Leaving bike out: yellow light
5. Refusing to share toys: green light
6. Telling lies to avoid punishment: yellow light
7. Shoplifting: red light
8. Smashing own toy: green light
9. Calling a person names: yellow light
10. Not doing homework: yellow light
11. Not hanging up clothes: green light if not inconveniencing others
12. Physically fighting with other children: red light unless for self protection
13. Looking at dirty pictures: yellow light because of community reaction
14. Making up stories about birth family: yellow light

Which of these behaviors bothers me the most?

Why?

Which are likely to have the most important long range consequences?

Why?

How then do we set priorities?

Red light behaviors are top priority along with those that interfere with development and those that have serious long range consequences.

CHANGING THE SITUATION

Sometimes we can prevent misbehavior by changing the situation. We have already identified some situations that seem to cause trouble. How might we change each of the following situations to prevent certain behaviors or encourage others?

Early morning: Getting up fifteen minutes earlier. Doing as much as possible the night before. Having a special treat such as cookie or cartoon if you're ready at the specific time.

Meal time: Eating a little earlier or a little later. Simplifying foods. Limiting topics of conversation. Rewarding good table manners. Giving children turns at planning menus. Give time to tell what they did that day at the table, perhaps restricting to reporting positives. Problems can be discussed later.

Bedtime: Give warning. Give plenty of time for getting ready. Give reward for being ready on time. Make games like tie-dye sheets and underwear for pajamas. Spend time reading, talking, back rub. Rituals help. Allow night light, special toy. Do not deny fears.

Holidays: Simplify to prevent fatigue. Let children help. Try to give some individual attention. Don't promise too much or expect too much. Allow children to express feelings.

With company: Allow children to help. Give lots of attention before hand and try to give some attention while company is there. Give chores that child can handle so you can involve and reward child. Be careful of talking about child. Praise behavior but not characteristics of child.

Before or after visits with natural parents: Use reflective listening. Reassure child it is OK to want to be with parents and that he can come back. Be careful not to condemn or criticize family.

Is it right for foster parents to change their family routines or should we insist that children fit in with us?

Everyone in the family must adjust when there is a new member. Flexibility and minor changes may make it easier for everyone.

When children are very young we talk about "baby proofing" the house. We remove breakable or dangerous objects so that they are out of reach. What are some of the ways we might want to remove temptation for older children:

1. Certainly put away any things that a particular child is having trouble with.

2. Keep environment simple for children who have a low tolerance for stimulation.

3. Make sure that everyone has a safe and private place for possessions and that they use it.

4. Make sure children have a place or opportunity for running and rough-housing.

5. Make sure each child has privacy.

6. Make sure each child has or has access to or a way to earn the things they need and the things that are important.

7.

Let's think of a particular child.

The child's age is ______________________.

Developmentally he or she is:

Behaviors we want to stop:

Behaviors we want to encourage:

Behaviors that are good -- that we don't want to change:

Let's take one behavior:______________________________

1. Why might the child behave this way?

   Does if fit with what we know about his or her development stage?

   When is the behavior most likely to occur?

2. Specifically the behavior to be changed is:

3. How important is it to work on this behavior?

   Is it red, yellow, or green light behavior?

   Why does it bother me?

   What are the long range consequences?

4. Is there any way we can change the situation? How?

SESSION 6

HANDLING BEHAVIOR IN THE SHORT RUN: SETTING RULES AND CONSEQUENCES

INSTRUCTOR'S INTRODUCTION

Purpose:

1. Specify the characteristics of good rules.
2. Learning how to set consequences and what different consequences mean to a child.
3. Exploration of the different effects of punishment and rewards on behavior.

Methods:

1. Have foster parents list characteristics of good rules. Put on chalkboard and discuss. Practice changing common rules into better worded rules. After going over the rules on page 55 and 56 of the participant's manual, foster parents may volunteer some of their rules and the class may work on modifying them.
2. Review what is meant by natural, logical and artificial consequences. Discuss discipline as teaching and fill in the chart on pages 58, 59 and 60 in the participant's manual. When negative consequences are permitted by agency policy, discuss the limits on using a particular technique.
3. Many people object to rewarding behavior as they feel people, especially children, should do what's expected of them without rewards. Discuss the rewards we get as adults for doing things we ought to do anyway.

SESSION 6

HANDLING BEHAVIOR IN THE SHORT RUN: SETTING RULES AND CONSEQUENCES

Once that we have decided that a behavior is important we have to make sure the child knows what we expect or insist upon and that he knows how to do it. What are characteristics of good rules?

1. They are specific as to behavior.
2. They include alternatives or choices and rewards.
3. They include logical consequences, both positive and negative
4. They concern behavior which is under the control of the child.
5. They concern behavior the parenting person can monitor.
6. They are stated positively whenever possible.

How might these rules be changed for the better?

Don't go into the street or you'll get a spanking.

The street is dangerous. You may get hurt. If you run into the street, you will have to play in the yard for the rest of the day.

If you don't make your bed or clean your room you are "grounded" for that day.

Your bed must be made and your clothes picked up before you watch television or go anywhere after school.

Do your homework or no story.

When you finish your homework for tonight, I will read you a story.

If you fight, your punishment is to go to your room.

If you physically try to hurt each other, you must be separated for fifteen minutes. When you are angry with your brother, use your mouth to tell him why.

Next time you take your brother's bike without asking, you won't be able to watch TV.

Ask your brother before you use his bike. If you take his bike without asking, you will have to put yours in the garage.

What are the ways we can make sure children know the rules?

The best way is to include them in setting up the rule. Second is to repeat it clearly and and the child repeat it. Repeat the rule every time you reward the child or provide a logical consequence on the basis of the rule.

Why might we include children in setting up rules?

They are more likely to understand the rule and the reason for it. They will feel the rule is fairer and get a chance to express their feelings. You may understand more about why they behave the way they do after hearing their side of the story.

SETTING CONSEQUENCES

What is meant by allowing the child to learn from the consequences of his behavior?

The child learns to make decisions and take responsibility for the consequences as a result of the decisions.

People talk about natural, logical and artificial consequences.

Natural Consequences are:

Those that occur without the parent's intervention.

Logical Consequences are:

Those that the parent sets and which are directly connected to the behavior.

Artificial Consequences are:

Those that the parent sets but which have no connection to the behavior.

What would I be teaching a child if I allowed him or her to experience the natural consequences of behavior whenever possible?

He learns what the consequences are and learns to make decisions in terms of the consequences.

For each of the discipline techniques parents might use to manage behavior, let's look at what it might teach the child, the effects on self-esteem, whether or not it is permitted by agency policy, and limits that should be applied.

Type of Discipline Technique	What It Teaches the Child	Effects on Self-Esteem	Limits on Using Technique	Permitted by Agency Policy?
PHYSICAL Spanking	to hurt or strike out when you are angry	negative	should not be used with abused children and probably not with any child	
Washing Mouth Out With Soap	bigger people can hurt and humiliate little ones	negative	should not be used	
Holding or Restraint	bigger people have power. They may help you, or hurt you	can be helpful if it protects child, negative if applying unreasonable adult controls	used minimally to stop child from hurting self or others or destroying property	
VERBAL Scolding	to put up with scolding in order to do what you want	harmful, especially it it attacks character rather than behavior	vent feelings by using "I messages". Set rules and carry through	

*adapted from: Emotional Development by Emily Jean McFadden.

Type of Discipline Technique	What It Teaches the Child	Effects on Self-Esteem	Limits on Using Techniques	Permitted by Agency Policy?
Nagging	to ignore or turnoff	can be harmful	same as scolding	
Praising	that he can do things well	positive	praise behavior realistically	
WITHHOLDING OR GIVING Withholding Food	bigger people can take away what you need	negative	may be permitted for desserts or special treats, but tends to make food very important	
Giving Extra Money or Treats	you can earn good things	positive	should be realistic in terms of behavior	

Type of Discipline Technique	What It Teaches the Child	Effects on Self-Esteem	Limits on Using Techniques	Permitted by Agency Policy?
Withholding Clothes	bigger people can take away the things you need. To take responsibility for things you value	negative unless natural consequences	special or very expensive clothes may be used as rewards	
OTHER "Time Out" or Isolation	either that you leave a situation until you're in control of self or that people will desert you	within limits, positive, or negative if used to excess	keep very short, keep child close to adult, emphasize child gaining control	
Redirecting Child's Activity	that people are helpful and there are better ways to handle a situation	positive	none unless adults attempt to deflect child from dealing with hurt and anger	
Grounding	that outside activities are based on responsible behavior	positive in teaching responsibility, negative if interferes with activities important for development	keep appropriate in terms of duration and assure child has access to important activities	

What does physical punishment teach the child?

1. That bigger, more powerful people can hurt you.

2. It's OK to hurt people when you're angry.

3. You can do what you want if you are willing to get hurt.

Punishment is only effective under certain circumstances. Although these are effective, we find that concentrating on punishment leads us to greater and greater extremes. Punishment is effective when:

1. It is immediate upon the act.

2. It is something the child has not become used to.

3. It is applied to each instance of misbehavior.

4. It is high intensity (harsh).

5. Rewards for good behavior are available.

Other problems with punishment.

1. It may damage an already fragile self-esteem.

2. It takes the guilt away so that if the punishment doesn't bother a child too much, he will continue the behavior.

3. It provides a form of attention.

4. It sometimes puts a child in control. He can make adults punish him.

5. If it doesn't work, we may be tempted to use something more harsh.

6. It provides external control rather than teaching the child why.

7. The child may become angry about the punishment and forget the behavior and, therefore, forget the lesson.

8. It may scare other children.

9. Those children who need it most, respond least.

10.

11.

Using Rewards to Shape Desired Behaviors

If we reward children for doing well, won't we teach them to expect rewards for everything they do?

Only if rewards are excessive. We use rewards while the behavior is difficult and decrease them as it becomes easier.

What are some of the rewards I get for doing things I'm expected to do.

Combine rewards with praise so that they will come to feel good about themselves.

How can we use rewards to teach children, but not set it ups to that they will only behave well in order to get rewards?

Why should I bribe children to do what they are supposed to do?

How do rewards and punishments fit into what we know about development?

Infants: Controls are all external. Child needs to learn to trust others. Lots of praise with rewards will help child learn to look for social rewards rather than material rewards.

Toddlers, Preschoolers: Controls are still basically external but social rewards are important. Child will usually respond to combination of rewards and praise.

School-Age: Children feel that things should be "fair." Will work hard to earn goodies and other's esteem. Are very resentful over unfair punishments.

Teens: Can wait longer for rewards but still need sense that people care about them. Should be actively involved in setting rules and consequences.

Things to remember about consequences:

1. Whenever possible the consequences should have direct bearing on the behavior or be logically connected to it.

2. Negative consequences should always be paired with positive consequences; specify a negative and positive consequence for each behavior being modified. Rewarding appropriate behavior is more important than setting negative consequences for inappropriate behavior.

3. Ignoring a behavior will, over time, show a child he or she will not win attention, or exert control with that behavior. It is useful to ignore all inappropriate behaviors that are not red light behaviors, (e.g., dangerous, destructive or illegal behaviors).

4. Keep consequences small and immediate. If a large consequence seems appropriate (e.g., a trip to the movies), break into small increments that can be given immediately (e.g., ten marks on a chart or ten tickets, one given for each incident of appropriate behavior), or one night at home for each half hour late.

5. Always give explanations even if the child doesn't accept them. Find out why child thinks rule in unimportant. Consider modifying the rule to one child suggests, if what child suggests is reasonable.

6. Encourage child to tell what he or she thinks are appropriate consequences, and why. Use consequences child suggests if they are reasonable. Don't let the child set unreasonable consequences.

7. Be careful to select consequences that do not harm the child physically or emotionally. Some children may be terrified of consequences that other children would take in stride (e.g., isolation).

8. Do not feel that you have to anticipate all behaviors. The first time a behavior occurs, or fails to occur, discuss reasons for why it is important. Help child learn. If it is an important area of safety, explain what consequences will be if incident is repeated.

9. Do not modify consequences after the behavior has occurred. If consequences are ineffective discuss changes for next event.

SESSION 7

DISCIPLINING TEENS

INSTRUCTOR'S INTRODUCTION

Purpose:

1. Allow participants to express feelings about adolescents behavior.
2. Explore the developmental levels typical of teens.
3. Discuss how adolescents in foster care may have special needs or exaggerate behaviors typical of the stage.
4. Explore typical adolescent behaviors which might be expecially difficult for particular families with a view to the type of information a foster family needs before a teen is placed in their home.
5. Develop strategies for handling particular teen behaviors.

Methods:

1. Since many adults find adolescents difficult or even frightening, ask group to list things that are problems with teens. Afterwards, have them list the rewards of working with teens.
2. Review what has been covered about development in workbook. It may be best to cover some of the material in a mini-lecture. Foster parents can probably describe most of the physical changes and some of the social and emotional changes typical of this stage, but they may need help with moral and cognitive changes. Stress that adolescents differ and it is the developmental stage that is most important to helping a teen work to independence.
3. Discuss the importance of understanding a particular young person before placement. The check list of behaviors on page 70 of the participant's manual may be done individually or it may be used as a values clarification exercise. If the latter, be sure to stress that it is O.K., even good, that we have different values; that we can work with different types of children.
4. Break class into small groups for exercise in dealing with specific behaviors. Each group should take a different behavior. Use form on pages 72-74 in participant's manual. After reporting back to class, the groups may reconvene and develop a contract to use with a teen around the behavior that they discussed previously. Use models in Appendix D.

5. You might use a role play in which volunteers take the role of foster parents, teen and case worker. Some situations are:

   a. Fifteen year old girl was out two hours beyond curfew last night.

   b. Sixteen year old tenth grader wants to drop out of school in April.

   c. Fourteen year old boy refuses to take baths.

Note: Instructors may want to refer to Fostering the Teenager by Donald Loppnow.

SESSION 7

DISCIPLINING TEENS

Many of us find that although we can do a good job with children, it is much more difficult when they become teenagers.

What are some of the problems and concerns in parenting teenagers?

- They are bigger and harder to control.
- The behavior is often more serious in having long range consequences.
- They go further away and we can't monitor as well.
- They are often rejecting.
- We hear a lot about the dangerous things teens do.
- They are often involved in fads or extreme behaviors.

What are some of the rewards in parenting teenagers?

- We can see the beginning of adulthood.
- They often demonstrate empathy and involvement.
- They are more serious and can discuss things with us.
- They may make significant contributions to the family.
- We can relate to some teenagers as adults.
- We can vicariously enjoy some of their accomplishments.

Adolescence (the teenage years) is a phase in the process of growning up, a transition period between childhood and adulthood. The teenager faces certain developmental tasks that must be accomplished while progressing toward maturity.

Adults tend to view adolescence as a period of many problems--conflicts between parent and teenager, and acting out. It is important to remember that adolescence does not necessarily involve more problems than any other developmental stage. In many instances, adult fears about adolescence may lead to a heightening of developmental problems and parent-teenager conflict.

We might think about teenagers as moving from childhood to adulthood--halfway in between, but something very different from either. For teens, as for younger children, the same process is followed in trying to encourage certain behaviors or discouraging others. These are:

1. Assess the reasons
2. Specify the behavior to be changed
3. Set priorities
4. Change the situation
5. Set rules
6. Determine the consequences
7. Carry through

There may be some differences in dealing with teens as compared to other children. What are some of these differences:

1. Teens have and need more independence. They will soon be adults. We can't monitor behavior as well.
2. Teens are more aware of natural consequences and must learn to live with them when they are beyond our control.
3. Teens are attempting to break away from adult authority and will often resent our intrusion.
4. It is probably best to take the role of counselor rather than parent especially with the older teen.
5. Teens are facing their own independence and this may be scary for them.

Let's think about some of the changes adolescents undergo. First are the physical changes:

1. Size - height and weight
2. Secondary sexual characteristic development: Hair, breasts, etc.
3. Sexual functions, menstruation, nocturnal emission
4. Changes in features, skin, hair
5. Changes in voice

What do these changes mean to the foster parent in terms of providing for the physical needs of teens?

1. Respect for privacy
2. Health and hygiene education and products
3. Changes in clothing needs and styles
4. Reassurance about changes and meeting concerns about being too tall, too short, too fat, too thin, etc.

What are some of the emotional changes?

1. Moody and withdrawn
2. Explosive
3. Alternating between independence and dependence
4. Worried about future
5. Concerned about "Who am I?"

What are the social changes of teens?

1. High involvement in peer group.
2. Interest and activites with opposite sex.
3. Explanation of adult world.
4. Adoption of adult models outside of the family.

What are the changes in moral development?

1. Seek principals behing right and wrong.
2. May adopt strong religion or reject religion.
3. Questioning of adult rules.
4. Highly idealistic.

How might being in foster care affect the way in which teens feel about themselves and how they relate to others?

- Lack of strong family ties may make rebellion more difficult.
- Developmental task is to break away from family.
- Establishment of identity may give rise to new questioning about birth family.
- Lack of self-esteem may make peer group more attractive or may make it difficult to establish relationships with peers.
- Development may be delayed.
- May have extra needs for security.

INTELLECTUAL (COGNITIVE) DEVELOPMENT:

What are some of the typical characteristics of the teenager's intellectual development?

1. New level of abstract thinking possible.
2. Greater attention span.
3. Greater insights into problem solving and interpretation.
4. Greater ability to generalize.
5. Greater ability to understand different points of view and subtle difference.

An important aspect of all the teenagers' intellectual development, in addition to formalized education, is the need for information which will prepare them for independent living.

What are some of the areas related to daily living which are important for teenagers to know when they leave home to live independently?

1. How to shop for and prepare food.
2. How to select and care for clothes.
3. How to get health and dental care.
4. Job skills.
5. Insurance.
6. Educational opportunities.
7. Economic activities, banking, checking.
8. Transportation.
9.

When a teenager is placed in our home, it is important to have a good understanding of where that young person is developmentally. It is also important to know about any behaviors which might be especially worrisome. It is important that we know about these behaviors for any child but they may become more worrisome when a child is close in size to an adult and is away from home for most of the day.

Checklist of Behaviors which may be Problematic in My Home

____Aggressive toward younger children

____Poor school attendance

____Poor grades in school

____Withdrawl, sulking, uncommunicative

____Defiant, "talks back"

____Swearing

____Messy room

____Loud music

____Won't go to church

____Smoking cigarettes

____Drinking

____Marijuana use

____Bizarre, faddish or nonconforming dress, hair styles

____History of running away

____Picking at self, skin, hair, clothes

____Sexually active

____Stealing

____Lying, telling stories

____Poor personal hygiene

____Unsafe driving or other risk taking behavior

____Aggressive towards adults, authority

____Other things which may be important in my home:________
____

When including a teen in our home, it is important to know what developmental stage he or she has obtained in each of the dimensions we have studied before.

Physiological development:

A teenager may be physically still child-like or a sexually mature adult.

Sexual development:

Is he or she sexually active?

Self control:

How does the teen express anger? Joy? Disappointment?

Individual and peer group identification:

Is the teen a loner? Who are his or her friends? Is he or she in a gang? What are its characteristics?

Competence at living skills:

Can he or she take care of self, food, clothing? What does he or she know about money management?

Life goals and values:

What are his or her plans? Feelings about religion, politics?

One very important question to answer is: Is this a developmentally "young" adolescent who still needs a family for support or is this an "almost adult" who really wants and needs us as friends and counselors?

Can our family provide a physically mature individual with support and affection usually appropriate for a younger child? Can we live with a relatively independent young person?

Since one of the main tasks of adolescence is reaching adult independence, many teens will strongly react against any attempt to saddle them with another family. One way to approach the mature teen is to work together to develop a contract that covers all those behaviors which are important to you and the teen.

(See Appendix D)

In order to deal effectively with teenagers, we can follow the same format as described in earlier session.

Let's take a specific behavior: ______________________________

Why does this teen behave this way?

Why does it bother me?

What are the long range consequences?

SHORT RUN:

1. Specify behavior:

2. Assess behavior:

3. Set Priorities:

   Should I get involved?
   Can I just give advice?
   Should I set limits?

4. Would changing the situation help?

5. What is the rule I will make?

Has the teen had input into the rule?

Is it clear?

6. What are the consequences?

Negative:

Positive:

7. How do I carry through?

SESSION 8

HANDLING SEXUAL BEHAVIORS

INSTRUCTOR'S INTRODUCTION

Purpose:

1. Help participants realize what is meant by sexuality, what is included in sexual behaviors and why sexuality is an important topic in any discussion of discipline.
2. Provide an opportunity for value clarification around sexual behaviors.
3. Explore why sexual behaviors are problematic in foster families, especially those which may lead to abuse or which might lead to sexual exploitation; develop techniques for handling problematic behaviors.
4. Learn about the dynamics of sexual exploitation and the nature of childhood seductiveness.
5. Explore ways a foster family can work with a sexually abused child.
6. Develop a set of house rules to prevent sexual exploitation and protect foster families from false accusations of sexual exploitation.

Methods:

1. There is a lot of material to be covered in the introduction to this session. A mini-lecture is recommended. The topic of sexuality will be most easily introduced if sexual behaviors have been included in earlier discussions. Most groups will want and need to express their feelings about changes in sexual attitudes and gender roles over the last few decades.
2. Use the chart on page 73 of the participant's manual as a value clarification exercise. Stress the rightness of different values. These behaviors are meant to be vague so that part of the exercise is to determine the range of kissing, touching, etc. Stress that masturbation is a normal activity, that virtually all children masturbate and must not be reprimanded for masturbation in private.
3. The behaviors selected here for consideration are forms of touching: touching others inappropriately, masturbation, and letting others touch us inappropriately. The latter leads into a discussion of sexual abuse and childhood seductiveness. You may break class into small groups to work on specific problems and report back to class. If so, be sure to include different types of behavior and different age ranges. Ask each group to go through all seven steps previously used or handling behaviors. Have these listed on board or newsprint where everyone can see them. Some behaviors to use for small group discussion are:

a. Thirteen year old boy who has been forcing a six year old boy to perform fellatio (oral intercourse) with him.

b. A seven year old girl who frequently masturbates in public.

c. A fifteen year old girl who is having sexual intercourse with at least three boys regularly.

d. Two six year olds who constantly undress each other and rub each others genitals.

e. A twelve year old girl who hugs and tries to deep kiss her foster father, sits on his lap and tries to rub his penis.

Note: Instructor may want to refer to "Guiding the Sexual Development of the Foster Child" by Carolyn Verick.

4. Allow group to express feelings of disgust, shame, revulsion at the idea of childhood molestation. Point out that it does not always include intercourse, that the perpetrators are not always obviously sick or unusual, that the child is not always physically harmed by the behavior and may even enjoy it, and both boys and girls are sexually abused.

5. Discuss the ways in which foster families may help the sexually exploited child, stressing that not all families can do this effectively.

6. Explore the rules for foster family living and stress how these are important for both the protection of the child and the foster family. Remind the group that each family must develop their own rules but that they are important for the protection of all family members.

Reward the group for their willingness to deal with a difficult topic. Remind them growth is sometimes difficult but a life long process.

SESSION 8

HANDLING SEXUAL BEHAVIORS

One of the most value laden areas to discuss is the area of sexuality. Although things are changing rapidly in our society, many of us still feel uncomfortable discussing sexual topics. At the same time, sexual topics arouse strong feelilngs of right and wrong. Sometimes we forget sexuality includes many things besides the sexual act itself. Actually by sexuality we mean:

How do I feel about my self as a man or as a woman?

How do I expect men and women to behave toward me and toward each other?

What kinds of behaviors do I expect of men? Of women?

How do I feel about my body? About my genitals? About taking care of myself?

How do I feel about touching other people? About being touched? About sexual intercourse?

What does it mean to become a parent? A mother? A father?

It is important for us as foster parents to understand sexuality at different ages and to set rules and guidelines in our homes about sexual behaviors. There are several reasons why this is important:

Since discipline means teaching, it also includes teaching children appropriate and inappropriate sexual behaviors.

How we discipline children around sexual issues will have an important bearing upon how they come to view themselves as men or women and as sexual persons.

Our sexual values may be very different from those of the child's natural family or those the child has previously known.

Because children who live in our house are not related to us or to each other, their behaviors might take on different meanings than what they intend or they misinterpret some of our behaviors.

Children who have been sexually exploited may either attempt to establish inappropriate sexual relationships with others or may misinterpret affectionate gestures as sexual advances.

Children today are being raised in a world which is very different than it was when most of us were children. Some of the changes may be for the better and some may not be so good. For instance ideas about how men and women, boys and girls should act and dress, where they should work and how they should express their feelings have changed for at least some people. We now see and hear much more sexually explicit material on television, in songs, on the radio and in movies. Language and topics once confined to the locker room are discussed publicaly and in family newspapers. Fashions tend to show off the body in ways which would have been shocking a generation ago.

How might some of these changes be for the good?

> People may be more free to express their feelings and less likely to be trapped in sexual stereotypes.
>
> People may feel better about their bodies and natural functions.
>
> People may feel less guilty about sexual feelings and fantasies.

How might some of these changes not be so good?

> People may feel atypical or abnormal if they don't live up to the sexual images.
>
> People may use each other as sexual objects for gratification rather than attempt to establish a relationship.
>
> People may feel pressured into sexual relationships before they are ready.

When we say things are good or bad, we are talking about a matter of values. Each of us has different values. This is a good thing. In our society people are allowed to be different. Although we set limits on behaviors through the law and courts, within these legal limits, each of us is free to choose our own life style. As we look at some of the sexual behaviors that are problematic and that cause difficulties for us in our work with children, we must keep in mind that each of us has a right to our own feelings. We need to ask ourselves, what limits would I set on this behavior for myself? For other adults? For children? Would the natural families of the children in my home agree with my limits? How might their values be different than mine? How can I teach children appropriate behaviors?

The chart on the next page lists sexual behaviors around which we have different attitudes.

BEHAVIOR	AGE AT WHICH IT IS LIKELY TO OCCUR	WHEN IS THIS BEHAVIOR OK?	WHEN IS THIS BEHAVIOR NOT OK?	WOULD NATURAL FAMILIES AGREE WITH ME
Looking at Dirty Pictures	pre-adolescence through adulthood	privately or with consenting others	if it is exploitive	
Kissing	all ages	with consent if it is in non-sexual way	sexual kissing is never appropriate except between sexually appropriate partners	
Swearing and Dirty Language	pre-school on up	depends on norms of group	if it is assaultive of others	
Flirting	can start very early if child imitates adults or finds it effective	between potentially sexually appropriate partners	when a sexual relationship would be inappropriate	
Masturbation	infancy on up	in privacy	in public	
Incest	the initiation would usually be an adolescent or adult	never--illegal	always not OK	
Touching	infancy on up	with permission	without permission or when it is exploitive	

Why might sexual behaviors be more problematic in foster families than in biological families

1. People in a foster family do not necessarily share the same value system. Therefore, a particular behavior may have different meanings.

2. Foster families include people who are not related to one another and may not have a long-time relationship with one another. The incess taboo may not seem salient.

3. Living together on an intimate basis may trigger sexual arousal or sexual fantasies. Many people do not realize that feelings are very different from behavior.

4. The privacy of family living may give people the opportunity for sexual activities that would not be possible outside a family situation.

5. Individuals with low self-esteem may attempt to sexually exploit or manipulate others to demonstrate their attractiveness or they submit to sexual overtures because they do not feel they would be liked in any other way.

6. Children who have been sexually exploited may attempt to reestablish the relationship. They may not know of other ways to relate to an adult or to express and receive affection.

7. Sometimes individuals do not recognize the sexual dimensions of their behavior or the fact they are sexually exploiting others.

Would we say that touching is red light, yellow light or green light behavior? Why?

Yellow light. It is sometimes OK and sometimes definitely not OK. Every family should establish guidelines about who touches when, under what circumstances. Young children must be taught that no one has the right to touch them in their bathing suit area and that they should come to foster parent when touching doesn't feel good.

Touching can cause a lot of problems. We know that touching is important. Babies need to be cuddled or they usually don't develop properly. Touching someone's arm or hugging someone can show affection, sympathy and caring. However, some people don't like to be touched. The ways in which we touch can be offensive.

Why might a child touch others inappropriately?

They have been encouraged to do so in the past or not taught not to. Sometimes touching is out of curiousity or a reaching out for affection but becomes a bid for attention.

Why does it bother me?

It infringes on another's private space. It is embarrassing. I don't know how to handle it.

What are the long range consequences?

In an older child, inappropriate touching may be viewed as seductive, intrusive, aggressive or even illegal.

What can I do in the short run?

Tell the child clearly who can touch, how and under what circumstances. Show affection and attention for appropriate touching. Move away from child or separate from others for inappropriate touching.

Sometimes children will touch themselves in such a way that it bothers us. Masturbation is one form of touching self.

Why might children masturbate?

It feels good. It is a normal activity in which virtually all children engage. It is problematic when done in public.

Why does it bother me?

It may not fit my value system. It is embarrassing. Worry whether it is normal.

What are the long range consequences?

In an older child, public masterbation may verge on exhibitionism, which is illegal.

Masturbation in private has no consequences unless a child remove him or herself from other activities necessary for normal development in order to masturbate.

What do I do in the short run?

Tell the child that it is private behavior for bedroom or bathroom. Insist the child not masturbate in public.

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Why might children let others touch them inappropriately?

If they are dependent on the other person, they will try to please that person. It often feels good. Child does not realize it is wrong until he or she gets older. The other person may force or threaten a child into inappropriate touching. They may promise a child treats or rewards. Often it is considered "our secret" and the child is told not to tell anyone.

Why does it bother me?

This is illegal and exploitive. Most people react with feelings of shock, disgust or feeling sick.

When does touching become sexual exploitation?

When a person, usually an adult or older child, uses a child's normal developmental process to provide gratification of the older person's special needs. This may or may not include sexual intercourse.

What do we mean when we say that a child has been sexually abused or exploited?

When a child has been manipulated or coerced into a sexual relationship. An important dimension is the unequalness of power.

By whom are children usually sexually abused?

Most children are sexually abused by family members or close friends of the family.

Why aren't more cases of child molesting reported?

Often the child is afraid or feels guilty or feels he or she is somehow to blame. Sometimes the child is not believed. The family attempts to protect the abuser or to protect the child's reputation.

What are the long range consequences of sexual abuse or exploitation of children?

It is very important how others react. A one time only episode where the adults do not over react may not be too important. A long time relationship often results in anger and guilt. The child may become seductive and/or find it very difficult to establish a mature relationship.

What are some of the factors that lead to greater psychological damage?

- Over reaction on the part or adults.
- Concern that a beloved parent is being punished because of what the child did.
- Guilt because of pleasure from the act or enjoyment of the goodies that were rewards.
- Feelings of shame and fear of discussing it.
- Unresolved anger.

What is the job of the foster parent in working with the sexually abused or exploited youngster?

- Obtain information from the worker about the child's experiences. Not just the abusive ones.
- Communicate clearly and consistently to the child the norms and expectations of the family. Insist that touching one another is only done with permission.
- Foster parents should say that in the past you learned to be nice by touching in that way. We believe everybody has a private body and that body should not be touched except for bathing, doctor's examination, etc.
- Allow the child to communicate behaviorally even if it is sexually explicit, then express the rules as above. This requires exploration of values.
- Do not perpetuate myths or misconceptions by avoiding the issue or by not answering the child's request for information.
- Tell the child he or she is not to blame for what happened.

Children will sometimes actually attempt to get others to interact with them in a sexual way. We call this "behaving seductively". What are some child behaviors that might be seen as seductive?

Body postures and gestures, style of dress, sharing secrets, sitting on lap, dancing, wrestling, tickling, tone of voice, calling endearments, walking around partially undressed.

Why might a child behave this way?

This is learned behavior. Child was rewarded for this type of behavior in the past. May model behavior after seductive parent or other adult. Child may feel this is only way he or she can successfully relate to an adult.

Why would it bother me?

It is not appropriate behavior for children in our society. It is embarrassing. It can disrupt family relationships. I may feel helpless and not know what to do. It is sometimes difficult to differentiate between demonstration of affection and sexual overtures.

What are the long range consequences?

Seductive children usually do not feel good about themselves. They feel they must allow themselves to be used to get close to others. Can generate anger, difficulty in long term relationships and further sexual exploitation.

What can I do about it in the short run?

Be non-judgemental of child, but point out inappropriateness of certain behaviors. Give clear messages about appropriate ways to express affection. Set up clear rules. Show lots of attention and affection within rules. Teach ways to earn good things.

What are some of the rules that foster families might establish?

1. Privacy
   Everyone needs privacy. Children should learn to knock and others should always knock when a child is behind a closed door. Bathroom doors should be closed whenever someone is using the toilet, washing or bathing, as soon as the child can safely use tub and toilet and knows how to dress self.* Children of opposite sex should not bathe, sleep or toilet together after 5 years of age.

2. Learning proper words for sexual organs

   A child can not describe what happened if they do not know the appropriate words for rectum, breasts, buttocks, penis and vagina.

3. Clothing

   Nobody in the family over five should be outside the bedroom or bathroom in underwear or nightclothes without a bathrobe. Very skimpy clothes should be restricted to beach or pool.

4. Touching
   No one should touch another in areas covered by bathing suit except for physical exam or help in bathing or toileting. No one touches another person without permission.

5. Sex education and responsibility

   Each person should have instruction in sexuality appropriate to age. Everyone should know that feelings of sexuality are normal, but do not have to be acted upon. We always have a choice.

6. The right to say "no"
   Everyone has the right to say "no" to touching, kissing, hugging or any other form of potentially sexual interaction.

*Note: Locked doors can be a safety hazard if child needs help. Locks are not necessary if people always knock and get permission to enter.

7. **Wrestling, tickling**

These are normal childhood behaviors that can have sexual overtones. They are often painful or uncomfortable and should be severely limited.

8. **Language**

Suggestive language is inappropraiate. Correct terms should be used when conveying information or asking questions.

9. **Feeling good about self**

Each person in the family should be made to feel valuable. Expressions of affection should be age appropriate and only with permission. People should never be made to feel embarrassed by their bodies or feelings.

10. **Being alone with one other person**

For the protection of children and family, there should always be a witness. Children may sexually exploit one another. Taking children into the parental bed is inappropriate and may be over-stimulating to child.

11. **Talking about behaviors and feelings**

Behaviors and feelings should be sharply differentiated. Feelings are OK. Behavior should be defined as appropriate or inappropriate to the situation. Never blame the child.

12. **Taking each person seriously and listening closely**

Never dismiss what a child has to say. It always has meaning. It is sometimes possible to head off a situation or prevent further harm. Getting as many facts as possible may be helpful if there has been sexual exploitation. Try to remain calm and express your concern.

SESSION 9

SELF-ASSESSMENT

INSTRUCTOR'S INTRODUCTION

Purpose:

1. Stress the importance of self-assessment and the need for personal growth.
2. Review the ways to change behavior using a behavior of one's own that one wants to change.
3. Explore the dynamics of abuse in foster care and why some families may find themselves becoming abusive.
4. Discuss ways families can work to prevent abuse from occurring.
5. Emphasize the rights of foster families and the role of foster family organizations.
6. Explore what foster families can do if they are accused of abuse.

Methods:

1. Stress that growth is a continual process and that we continue to change and develop as adults. Allow foster parents to express some of the ways in which they have changed.
2. Have the class as a whole or small groups examine parental behaviors and develop a strategy for change.
3. Explore reasons children might be abused by members of the foster family. Have participants list the different types of stresses on foster families. Point out those that are common to all types of families and those which are unique to foster families.
4. Have participants brainstorm ways in which they can prevent abuse from occurring in foster care. Review material in Appendix E and F.
5. Discuss the importance of foster family organizations and their potential for advocacy.
6. Help families explore what they might do if accused of abuse. Point out these steps would be helpful whether or not accusation is true.

SESSION 9

SELF-ASSESSMENT

As we have learned in this class, most of us continue to grow and change throughout our lives even into advanced old age. As I think about myself as a foster parent, how have I changed in the past years?

Do I still like to work with the same types of children?

Do the same kinds of things bother me as used to?

Thinking about myself, and the way I work with children, how would I like to change?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

Which of these areas should be on my top priority for change?

Specify the behavior: The behavior I want to change is _______:

What are the reasons I behave this way?

Why does it bother me?

What are the long range consequences of this behavior?

How do I handle it in the short run?

Is this a priority with me or should I be working on something else?

When am I most likely to behave this way? Or fail to behave this way?

How might I change the situation?

How might I set a rule for myself?

What are the natural consequences of this behavior?

NEGATIVE:

POSITIVE:

Do I want to establish logical consequences? What?

How can I reward myself when I succeed?

How can I carry through?

ABUSE IN FOSTER CARE

Unfortunately children are abused while in foster care. Often they are physically abused or neglected by members of the foster family. Why might this be:

1. Children often exhibit extreme behavior and ordinary methods of discipline do not seem to work.

2. Children who have been abused may act out until they get adults to abuse them.

3. Foster families are subjected to stresses that other families may not have.

4. Foster care policies may define abusive discipline that birth families are allowed to use.

5. Because the members of a foster family are not related, incest taboos may be weakened and affection will not temper discipline.

6. Like most families in our society, foster families have little exposure to or training in positive discipline and may rely too heavily on corporal punishment.

Let's explore each of these in terms of what we can do to prevent or stop abuse. All families undergo stress. What are some of the stresses most American families feel at some time or other?

Foster families are subject to all of the stresses of other families:

Economic, unemployment

Illness, death

Family disagreements and arguments

Accidents

Moves, relocations

Appliance breakdowns

Problems with extended family

Life cycle changes - births, middle age, children leaving home

Foster families experience all of these. They sometimes experience additional stresses arising out of fostering: stresses arising out of particular characteristics of the child, those arising from relationship with the agency, from the larger community or from the birth family. Let's explore how these may give rise to special stress.

Characteristics of the child:

Foster children may create additional stresses:

Temporary nature of stay

Child comes at different age with different values and background from family

Child is almost always suffering from separation trauma

Child may have special needs

Stress from the agency or system:

Policies are not always clear

Demands on family may not be realistic (treat them just like your own but let them go)

Paperwork, medicaid cards and other routines may be slow

Worker may not visit often enough or be unavailable for calls

Permanency plans may not be implemented

Reimbursement for family's expenses may be unrealistic

Continual coming and going of children may leave family in a chronic state of grief

Stress from the community:

Neighbors and others may treat child differently or blame family for child's behaviors

Resources may not be available or be restricted because a child is in foster care

Schools and other agencies may not involve the foster family in conferences

Many people do not understand foster care and see foster parents as exploiters "doing it for the money" or view them as charity cases when they seek help for the child

Stress from the birth family:

Family may compete with foster family, make negative comments or be hostile.

Family may not keep visits or make promises and disappoint the child.

Family may call or visit at inappropriate times.

Family may display behaviors that are bothersome.

What should we do if we think another foster family is mistreating a child?

This should be reported as a moral obligation if it is not a legal obligation in the state. If abusive behavior is not illegal, family may be encouraged to take classes and seek other forms of help.

Try not to condemn family but give them support in a difficult time.

Some important things for foster families:

1. Insist on being part of the team. Make sure you and the worker have regular contact and a chance to communicate. Worker must visit you in your home and talk with the child in your care.
2. Get good information about child and his or her background.
3. Know the plan for the child and your role in it.
4. Know when to ask for help.
5. Work with other foster families to
    a. develop resources for children and their families
    b. insist upon regular foster parent education opportunities
    c. lobby (most foster parents are voters and taxpayers)
    d. develop respite care
    e. educate the community
    f. create a healthy environment for all children

Why might a child claim he or she has been abused by the foster family when it isn't true?

1. Revenge or anger at family because they are in care, may feel they are getting too close to family and fear rejection.
2. Anger at bith family is directed at foster family.
3. Child may have found this is way to get attention.
4. Child may believe this will lead to return to birth family or a move.
5. Child may identify foster family with birth family and be truly confused as to who was abusive.
6. Child may be attempting to manipulate to get what he or she wants.

When there is an abuse report against a foster family, whether by the child, a neighbor, or someone else, the family must:

1. **Listen calmly. Get as many facts as possible.**
2. **Call the agency immediately and explain what is happening.**
3. **Keep a log or diary of conversations.**
4. **Seek the advice of an attorney.**
5. **Remember the agency must investigate complaints and talk to the child separately. This can be a protection for the family but all agency staff become potential witnesses against the family.**

SESSION 10

REVIEW AND SUMMARY

INSTRUCTOR'S INTRODUCTION

Purpose:

1. Review the material on discipline, consequences and development.
2. Explore what types of children they can best care for and the impact such children are likely to have on their families.

Methods:

1. The material for this session is deliberately short because many groups wish to use the last night for a party or celebration. A great deal of time can be spent on review if desired. Areas which were skipped or touched upon lightly can be elaborated upon at this time. Review can be in the form of brainstorming or small group discussion. If may be useful to point out where in the manual different topics are covered in detail.
2. Encourage participants to explore the types of children they and their families can work with most effectively. The material in Appendix F might be reviewed here if not adequately covered earlier.

SESSION 10

REVIEW AND SUMMARY

During the past sessions we have been discussing discipline. We have decided that discipline means:

1. teaching, instruction

2. punishment

3. regular pattern of behavior

4. training that corrects or molds behavior

5. a subject that is taught

6. a system of values, self-control

We have decided that children learn because of the consequences of their behavior, and have explored natural, logical and artificial consequences.

> Natural consequences are those that result without parental intervention.
>
> Logical consequences are connected to the behavior.
>
> Artificial consequences are not connected to the behavior.

Let's look at the stages of emotional development in Appendix B. What does this suggest about discipline for children at different stages?

Stage I:

Infants do not really need discipline, especially in the form of punishment. Redirection and consistent meeting of needs is important. Maintaining the child in a safe environment and removing hazards or fragile possessions will make management easier.

Stage II:

The young child sees control from the outside. Responds well to rewards and punishments if they are immediate, consistent, and connected to behavior. Explain whys of behavioral demands even if child doesn't understand. Extreme punishment creates anger. Child will begin to respond to social rewards and consequences as well as material ones.

Stage III:

As children develop, they begin to develop a sense of rules and of fairness. Discipline can be based on well-formed rules with immediate consequences, both rewards and punishments. Logical consequences are seen as fairer than artificial. Always explain why. Whenever possible, let child learn from natural consequences. Point out natural consequences but do not nag or blame.

Stage IV:

During adolescence, many children come to understand the reasoning behind rules and are able to translate rules into the concept of the greatest good for the greatest number. They become more concerned about the "spirit of the law rather than the letter of the law." They need lots of freedom to learn from their behavior but still need some limits. Parents can view themselves as counselors rather than trying to control the teen.

When I think of children I have known at various stages with which type of children do I work best?

Why?

How about the rest of the family? How do they relate to a child at this stage?

How would accepting a very young child into our family affect my children?

How would accepting a child who is older than any of mine affect them?

How would accepting an aggressive child affect my children?

What can I do if the agency insists upon placing a child I don't think we can handle, or who would be very disruptive?

Refuse. This situation would not be very good for either the child or the family. Remember, I and my family are a valuable resource to the agency. We can not continue to serve children if we are exploited, burned out or subjected to too must stress.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - What the Bible Says About Punishment

APPENDIX B - Are We Raising Children or Adults?

APPENDIX C - A Brief Review of Child Development

APPENDIX D - Behavioral Contracting with an Adolescent in Foster Care

APPENDIX E - Guidelines for Foster Parents: When to Ask for Help

APPENDIX F - Foster Parents' Rights to Share in Decision Making for the Foster Child: Some Issues that Foster Parents Should be Aware of

APPENDIX A

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT PUNISHMENT

by
Evelyn Felker

from
Raising Other People's Kids
William Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 1981

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A fund of child rearing advice is summed up in the expression "spare the rod and spoil the child." Unfortunately, carelessly used Scripture is sometimes quoted to justify what amounts to child abuse. For this and other reasons I want to discuss both the use and misuse of the Jewish and Christian teachings on child rearing.

The principle that children need discipline and guidance to grow up well is part of our religious heritage. But when we try to discover what the Bible says about rearing children (and specifically about the use of physical punishment), we need to consider everything the Bible says about the children of the covenant family, both in the old and new testaments. All that the Bible has to say about nurturing and training children is important, not just the most widely known or quoted verses.

True, certain verses do seem to aptly summarize biblical teaching. For example, Ephesians 4 summarizes the general scriptural message that parents should raise their children to know God: "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," I have also found it helpful to examine my child rearing by turning around the idea found in Hebrews 12: "As a father who loves his son disciplines him, so the Lord disciplines you." As I consider how the Heavenly Father deals with me, I gain understanding about how I am to deal with my children.

But we must be careful not to quote particular verses as the proof-test answer to almost any situation. One verse that we tend to use too often is Proverbs 22:15. "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." A verse similarly used is Proverbs 13:24: "he that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." And sometimes a parent gives an order and then throws the full weight of God's authority behind his order by quoting Ephesians 6:1. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." To avoid well-intentioned but indiscriminate use of these passages, I try to follow three principles when I consider what a specific verse has to say about discipline:

1. THE ENTIRE BIBLE IS THE CONTEXT FOR ANY PARTICULAR VERSE. Let's use as a specific example Proverbs 22:15 one of the verses quoted above: "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child..." We know that the Bible teaches that it is the Holy Spirit's work to convict us of our sins and to apply Christ's redeeming power to our heart to renew us: we cannot drive sin away by physical punishment. Thus this verse certainly cannot mean that we can "beat the devil" out of a child-which it is sometimes misinterpreted to suggest. Rather, it suggests that children like all of us, are inclined to sin, and that all of us need to be corrected because of this tendency. Such an interpretation is consistent with Old Testament texts like Isaiah 53-6 or New Testament texts like Romans 6:23-24.

2. WE MUST DETERMINE WHETHER THE LANGUAGE BEING USED IS LITERAL, POETIC OR SYMBOLIC: we must also decide on the best English translation of the original words. A good verse to analyze is Job 36:10: "He openeth also their ear to discipline." The word for discipline - musar - is sometimes translated "chastisement," sometimes as "instruction." Obviously, the sense here is not literal--God does not box our ears--so "instruction" is probably intended.

We must use similar interpretive logic when we use the verse from Proverbs quoted earlier - "He that spareth his rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." The word for chasten is musar; the word for rod is shebet, which can mean a long rod of any kind - a shepherd's staff, a sword, a scepter. Certainly the rendering of the King James Version just quoted is very valuable and accurate, a rendering of the Scriptures that has influenced all later translations. But we must remember that it was made in an age much more physically violent than ours, thus the choice of words was probably influenced by the culture of the time. We must also remember that shebet is used in different ways in different passage of the Bible: it is a rod of comfort in both Psalm 23 and Micah 7:14, where the prophet prays, "Feed thy people with thy rod."

Keeping such things in mind, we should realize that this verse can be translated as: He that spareth his scepter (symbol of authority) hateth his son, but he that loveth him instructs him betimes." This interpretation is consistent with the New Testament emphasis on discipline, which shows that God sometimes uses difficult experiences to chasten us.

3. WE MUST STRIVE TO BE AWARE OF THE SOCIAL CONTEXT of a practice and look beyond particular behaviors to principles. For example, in Mosaic Law (Deut. 21:13-21) parents were instructed to bring their rebellious son to the elders, make their complaint, and deliver him up for public stoning.

To properly understand this instruction we must consider the historical setting. A nomadic people without boy's schools or jails was confronted with a young adult who would not carry his share of the load and was wasting the family's resources. His refusal to help could well endanger the survival of his whole family, because everyone was needed to earn a living from the land. In fact, in cultures round about, parents had life and death control over children, but Isreal was instructed to carry out a public civil procedure; then the proper authorities would pronounce judgement. The principle appears to be that the family was to take responsibility for its deviant members, and to seek the help of the appropriate authorities when they had exhausted their resources. But there is no scriptural record that this drastic punishment was actually carried out, though it may have been. And certainly, because of our different social circumstances today, we should not follow the letter of this law.

The Hebrew psalm reads, "Children are a gift from the Lord." We do not own them, but we are privileged to help them grow up. It is our responsibility to guard them from harm, to provide them with good as we are able, and to permit them to mature with our guidance and help. Our authority over them is limited by the commandments of the God who gives them to us to nurture.

APPENDIX B

ARE WE RAISING CHILDREN OR ADULTS?

by: Patricia Ryan, Ph.D.

The Michigan Foster Parent Association decided to use their 4th annual educational conference to examine the way in which they are serving the children in their care. If the nation's future rests in the hands of today's children, then we must ask in what way are we providing these children with the care and education they need to accept the task of guiding the nation during the early decades of its second two hundred years? Will they be able to maintain standards of morality and decency and yet allow maximum freedom for individuals?

Foster parents are able to take many children into their homes, children who are among the most neglected and hurt in our society, and contribute to the development of these children into useful adults. They can provide some insight for other parents and for adults who work with children as to what we should be doing if our children are to develop into the type of people to whom we will want to entrust the future of our nation.

The sub-title of the conference was "Children Are People; Building the Next 200 Years." This phrase raises some important questions:

1) Do we treat children as people?

2) Are we raising children or adults?

3) How do we want children to behave?

4) How do we work toward helping children develop into the kind of adults we want them to be?

Do We Treat Children as People?

Our society is often said to be child centered and certainly foster parents are strongly committed to loving not only their own children but all children who need them. Yet when we look at the way children are treated, we must ask, do we really treat children in the way we are committed to treating human beings in our society? Much has been written on the failure of our courts, schools, and social service agencies to protect the interest of the child rather than the interest and convenience of the adults who care for him. A good many children in our society are legally helpless if their needs for nurturing homes, permanent relationships, adequate educational opportunities, proper medical care, or a fair share of the community's resources are not met by the adults responsible for their well-being.

Foster parents are often frustrated at the failure of their attempts to help children and at the apparent callousness and disregard society shows for the children of greatest need. As we attempt to correct some of these wrongs, we must not fail to ask if we are guaranteeing the rights of children as people in our treatment of them in our homes.

We often insist that children meet our standards in all areas and do things our way. We are usually much more tolerant of our adult friends and their idiosyncrasies than we are of children. We do not insist that our friends eat foods they do not like, play outside rather than read, dress in the way we would dress, or keep their dresser drawers neat. Certainly as parenting people we must set limits on a child's behavior and cannot allow behavior that is dangerous, destructive or illegal. We also have the right to insist that children (and the adults with whom we associate) are not disruptive of the rights of others or discourteous. As we insist on specific behaviors, we must ask ourselves is it necessary to the well being of this child and those around him to demand this behavior or could I allow him more leeway in deciding what is most comfortable for him?

Along these same lines we often insist or expect that children will behave the same way all of the time: sleep the same number of hours every night, eat the same amount of food every day, act in the same way all of the time. We sometimes need more sleep than usual or aren't sleepy at bedtime. We all are hungrier some days than others, get into moods where we don't want to do some of the things we usually do or find that our tempers seem shorter than usual. Just as we expect for ourselves, and extend tolerance in these areas to other adults, we must accept variations in children and allow them to decide what they need to meet their needs within the limits of safety.

When we start examining the feelings of children, we find that we often go from one extreme to another. Sometimes we deny that their feelings are important assuming that they will soon get over it. At other times we assume they are extremely fragile and must be protected. Certainly young children fluctuate in their moods more quickly than do most adults and often seem to get completely bound up in the mood of the moment. When things are "good they are very, very good but when they are bad, they are horrid." The child who is able to laugh and enjoy an ice cream cone after a hurtful event, has not necessarily gotten over his hurt. Although temporarily forgotten, if it was severe, he still carries the scars inside and will need time to heal. With our adult friends we are careful not to hurt their feelings needlessly and sympathize with them when they have been hurt. With children we often assume that their feelings of hurt are inappropriate rather than asking if it was necessary for us to be hurtful.

Sometimes we assume that we must be hurtful to teach or control them. When we realize that they have been hurt, we try to distract them or tell them they will get over it rather than recognizing their hurt and giving them time to heal.

Sometimes we are so eager to protect a child's feelings that we either do not tell him things he has a right to know, deny him oportunities to meet challenges, or deny the importance of hurtful situations. Although we are trying to act in the child's interests, we are at best, denying his rights as a person to acknowledge his life situation and possibly setting up a situation in which he will no longer be able to trust adults as he learns that in their attempts to protect him, they have not been honest.

In discussing other ways in which we fail to treat children as people we found that we often deny them the basic rights of freedom of expression, privacy, private ownership, and protection from cruel and unusual punishment. We decided that if children are people they have a right to express their hopes and their anger, their fears and their dreams. When these expressions are inappropriate or distasteful to us we can help them find a better way of saying what they are trying to say but we should be very careful not to deny their right to feel or their right to express their feelings.

Although few of us would like to think of ourselves as snoops, prying into our neighbors' business, we feel a right or even an obligation to snoop when it comes to our children. We enter their rooms without knocking, go through their drawers, and even read their mail. With little more subtlety we insist on knowing "what they are thinking." If children are people, then as soon as they are capable of taking care of their physical needs, we should extend them the privacy to do so, and knock before entering closed doors. We should provide each child with some space where he can keep his treasures undisturbed and secret if he desires. We can intrude on these areas only if we have "due cause" to believe that our intrusion is necessary to protect the health and safety of the child or those around him. We never have the right to insist that he share his feelings and only invite him to lie when we do so. If we think we can help him in dealing with those feelings, we can invite him to share with us but we have no right to insist.

In discussing privacy we touched upon the right of the child to determine who would use his possessions. We often tell a child he can't use other peoples' things without their permission and then insist he share his toys. We want our children to be unselfish but would not try to teach our adult friends this virtue by demanding they allow us to use their private property. If the toys and other goodies are limited in a family, it is wise to spell our clearly what belongs to the family and must be fairly shared and what belongs to an individual and can be used only with his permission. We can point out the advantage of sharing and set a good example but when we have designated some property as belonging to a particular child then we must respect his right to control the use of that property.

One other area in which we treat children differently than we do adults and thus not as people is in the area of corporal punishment. Although we are prevented by law from physically assulting adults, who are nearer our size and strength, we often feel it is not only permissible but necessary to physically hurt children if we are to raise them properly. Without repeating the long arguments that spell out the pros and cons of spanking children, there are certain points we might consider:

1. Spanking children in foster care is prohibited by many agencies.
2. Spanking a child who has little reason to trust adults offers additional support to his belief that adults are hurtful.
3. Spanking a child offers him just retribution for his misdeeds, dissipating the guilt which would lead to changed behavior. He is taught only to be more careful not to get caught again in the future.
4. When spanking doesn't work to control a child's behavior, we often find ourselves caught in using greater and greater physical force in order to change his behavior.

All of the above considerations suggest that we all sometimes forget to treat children as people. Immediately we think: but children are different. They must be controlled. They must be taught. What if they grow up and continue to behave as they do now?

This raises the question for the next section: Are we raising children or adults?

Our primary aim with children is to help them grow to be strong, self-sustaining adults. When we think of the term adult, different adjectives pop into mind: independent, self-controlled, Considerate, responsible, moral, and contributing. Many of the ways in which we do not treat children as people mentioned above are rationalized on the basis that children are incapable of behaving as adults and taking responsibility for their own behavior. Do you teach children self-control by punishing them so that they base their behavior on the fear of being caught? Do you teach children to be responsible by doing everything for them or by insisting they follow your rules? Do you teach children to be moral by denying their rights as people or expecting very little of them? Do you teach children the joy of contributing by expecting them to do what you say and only what you say?

It doesn't always seem sensible to think of children as adults. A baby cannot provide for his most basic needs without a caring adult. A five year old cannot drive a car. A ten year old does not have the same self-control as an adult. It is the very dependency of children and our own feelings of responsibility for their well being that often leads us to disregard their rights, on the one hand, and to allow them to get away with all kinds of nonsense on the other.

If we are truly in the business of raising children to be adults, we must determine the stage of development they are at and know what we can expect of them at that stage. With this knowledge we can set limits on their behavior and allow them the freedom to determined their own behavior within these limits. This is a very difficult job. It is so easy to demand too much or too little. When we catch a child stealing we wonder if he will grow up to be a criminal. When we see a child miss a treat because of his carelessness, we often try to soften the blow.

If we are to be successful in raising adults, we must not expect more of a child than he is capable of doing but we should not reward immature behavior. We should not punish a child for behavior that is consistent with his stage of development but we should allow him to experience all but the more serious consequences of that behavior. We do not have to fear that current disapproved behavior will continue or become more exaggerated in the adult but we should explain the consequences of undesirable behavior and stop dangerous or illegal behavior.

How Do We Want Children To Behave?

Each family has its own standards of behavior but there are certain kinds of behavior we can agree are desirable for children. As we discuss these areas we can ask ourselves, "How important is it really that my child meet my standards in this area?" Am I expecting more than he is capable of delivering? Am I creating a situation that encourages him to behave the way I want or expect him to behave? Are these behaviors I think are important for him when he is an adult?

Obedience: He is an obedient child, she is a good girl, are often the highest compliments we can pay a child. We are not often called upon to compliment adults by calling them obedient. We are more likely to say that an adult is thoughtful of others and carries out his or her responsibilities. We only think of an adult as obedient in terms of obeying rules that are set for the convenience of all. If this is what we mean by an obedient child then we want to help every child be "obedient."

More often we mean that a child should be obedient by obeying adult rules set for the convenience of the adults rather than the convenience of all including children. The good child is one who easily complies with the adults demands made upon him and who is not disruptive of adult activities. The super-good child is often too fearful of his own feelings and the reactions of those around him to take any independent action. If we were to be successful in raising obedient adults we would have a nation of people who always followed the rules and were afraid to deviate even when it was necessary. They would be incapable of devising new behaviors when the rules did not apply.

In helping our children grow, let us teach them consideration for others and responsibility rather than obedience.

Politeness: The rules of polite behavior make it easier to get along with other people by suggesting appropriate behavior and outlawing behavior that would be discomforting to others. Many of the traditional rules of etiquette no longer hold but some good manners never go out of style. When we teach our children good manners on the basis of making it easier for them to be comfortable with people and making it easier for people to be comfortable with them, we are building a basis for smoothing their way to adult relationships. If we insist that they follow old fashioned behavioral rules, expecially those that are only demanded of children, at best we are wasting our energy and possibly teaching them that courtesy is nonsense.

Cleanliness: Many of us feel disgust at examples of filth and dirt. We argue that not maintaining standards of cleanliness is unattractive, unhealthy, and immoral. Daily bath, neat rooms, and clean clothes are things that many children find unimportant. If we think carefully about our standards in these areas, we have to admit that we are seldom faced with a child who is dirty to a point where it is likely to make him ill or whose room is really a health hazard to himself or to his family. Cleanliness then becomes a social necessity. People will become uncomfortable around you, react negatively or avoid you if they sense you have not met their standards. This line of thinking teaches a child a little about the social reality in which he must live rather than insisting he follow our set rules.

Studiousness: The chances adults in our society are self-supporting and contributing members are closely bound to the amount of education they were able to obtain. Although we all know exceptions to this rule, college graduates who do nothing, grade school drop outs who have accomplished much, encouraging our children to do well in school increases their chances of being happy, productive adults. However, telling a child to do better or study more is seldom an effective way of increasing his school achievements. A more productive way of helping the child who is not doing well in school is to find out why. The child's teacher, the school social worker, the helping teacher, and perhaps a private therapist can work with the parent to determine the child's potential and the reasons for his failure. With this information these same people can help formulate a plan to improve his performance and help him develop career plans in line with his capabilities.

Honesty: This is one area where we can all agree. We do not want to encourage dishonesty in children especially if this leads them to be dishonest adults. Yet the truth is not always easily defined. Property rights are not always clearly determined. Some forms of dishonesty are socially acceptable: the courteous excuse, the little white lie. Absolute honesty, when it is needlessly hurtful, is not always the best policy. In asking the children be honest we should ask: Are they being dishonest or do they see things differently? Will they be punished for their honesty? Do they have ways other than stealing to provide for their needs? Am I asking more from them in this area than I would of my adult friends?

Maturity: All along we have been saying that it might be better to try to raise adults rather than children. At this point we might stop and ask how are children different? How are children different from their age mates? None of us would want to return to the time when small children were treated as adults, with adult expectations as to their behavior and understanding, and adult punishments when they broke the law.

Children do not have the physical capacity for certain behaviors, their emotional view of the world is different, and their knowledge of appropriate behaviors and alternatives is limited. Taking these factors into consideration, we can see children as developing in stages. At each stage their abilities to function come closer to what we would expect from adults. Thus as parents we are able to reward children for mature behavior while tolerating, but not rewarding, immature behavior. Thus demanding more mature ways of behaving then a child is capable of is unjust.

Recognition that individual children develop at different rates and the conviction that the slow child may reach eventual maturity helps us help the child. Often our fears become ridiculous when examined closely. A five year old who wets his pants will probably stop before high school. A child who bites his playmates must be stopped now, but he probably will not grow into an adult biter.

Viewing the child's development in stages helps us to see our job as helping to move the child to the next level of development from where he is at now, rather than insisting he act his age or meet our standards.

Raising Adults

How do we go about raising children to be adults? First by providing them a model of the kind of adult we want them to be.

We can not expect children to pay any attention if we insist "they do as we say, not as we do." By being courteous we teach children manners. By respecting their rights, we teach them to respect the rights of others. By being honest with them and with others we teach them to be honest. The way we act with our spouse and with them will set the pattern for when they marry and become parents. Most importantly we teach our children how to behave by how we treat them. It is very difficult for any person who doesn't feel worthwhile to enter into human relationships. He can not believe that others find him worthwhile, capable, or lovable if he has not come to believe he is these things.

A second way of helping children develop into adults is to let them experience the consequences of their behavior. If they are slow in the morning, they will be late for school. If they don't share, others will not play with them. If they don't eat, they get hungry. Of course this rule can not be followed if the consequences are dangerous to the child or others. In these cases, we have to make rules and spell out the consequences we will provide if the rule is broken. If you ride your bike in the street, you can not ride it again for a week.

Explaining to children the reason for the rule, the behavior expected or forbidden, and the consequences often makes it easier for all. Whenever possible, children should be involved in figuring out why they must follow the rule and the consequences for breaking it. Asking what they think will be an appropriate consequence often helps them gain greater understanding and develop a sense of fairness. When we can not think of a good reason for a rule, we should rethink the need for that rule.

Too many rules force us as parents to play policemen. We nag at a child until he stops listening to us. We are either letting the child get away with breaking a minor rule or spending all of our time enforcing consequences. It is important that every parent evaluate all of the rules and determine which are really important. Whenever possible we should do away with rules and leave the child free to make his own decisions and learn from the consequences. This doesn't leave us disinvolved for we still have an obligation to discuss with the child his alternatives in a situation and the possible consequences. We simply change our role from decision maker for the child to one of counselor.

We still retain the responsibility of limiting the child's behavior whenever it is potentially dangerous to himself or others, destructive, or illegal. The child must be physically stopped. When a family finds they cannot control a child's behavior in these areas, they should seek outside help. It does not mean that the family is inadequate or a failure. It doesn't mean that the child is necessarily sick or that the family is giving up on him. He cannot be allowed to hurt himself or others and the family who seeks help is carrying out their responsibility to him.

APPENDIX C

A BRIEF REVIEW OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

STAGE I

The infant is helpless, with little control over his body. This is a time of rapid physical growth and change. Even as a newborn a child is capable of learning and responding to stimulation. In the first year of life, the baby learns that he can cause certain things--cry and mother will come, shake the rattle and a noise occurs. The baby depends completely on mother or main caregiving person, but delights in father, brothers, and sisters, too. He sees his family only as people who exist to meet his needs, not knowing that others have needs too. He must be able to trust that his needs will be met. When he is angry, frustrated or happy, he has no control over his behavior; he simply reacts, kicking, screaming, laughing, and so on. He sees himself as the center of the world and has no sense of right or wrong.

Typical Behaviors

Learns to cry when hungry, eat, self regulation of sleep, shutting out external stimuli, hold up head, turn over, grasp, creep, walk, smile, coo, play, reach.

Afraid of loud noises, sudden movements, loss of caregiver. Discovers the genital organs. Some masturbatory behavior. Playing with the genitals is comparable to playing with any other part of the body: fingers, toes, etc.

Separation

A child at this stage of development is likely to react to separation by withdrawal. He may seem passive, not take a bottle or fuss, cry or wake up in the middle of the night, change sleep patterns, or be generally cranky. Minor illness is not unusual after a move.

The foster parent should give the child as much attention as possible--quiet talking, rocking, cuddling. Consistent and immediate attention to the child's needs is important.

STAGE II

As the child becomes able to move about independently and gains more control over body functions, he may move into the next stage. He learns to talk and can communicate with words as well as actions. He begins to understand that there are other causes besides himself but understands causation as it relates to his needs or wants--the light comes on so it won't be dark. He can relate to others outside the immediate family. Grandparents, relatives, and especially playmates become important to him. He needs approval from others but has little empathy for them. He begins to learn what makes others happy or mad and adapts to their expectations. He is still frequently overwhelmed by feelings. As he struggles to be more independent, he can be overcome by doubt or shame. The child is concerned about what behavior "works" to bring about rewards or avoid punishment, but depends on outside controls, as his conscience is still relatively uniformed. Child probably has difficulty understanding the difference between dreams, fantasy and reality. Problems understanding the concept of property.

Typical Behavior

Learns to feed self, begin toilet training, run, climb, build with blocks, ride bicycle, explores environments, handles and minipulates objects. Should learn names for emotions, for parts of all the body as well. May ask "why?" about everything. As child moves through this stage he or she learns to care for self in dressing, bathing and begins to develop fine motor skills for coloring, sewing, using scissors, etc. Fondles and plays with genitals. May compare self with mom and dad or other children-playing doctor. May fear loud noises, going down drain, animals, the dark, separation at bed time. May have nightmares.

Separation

The child may react to separation by withdrawal, becoming very active and aggressive, or alternating between the two. He may have nightmares, wet his pants although already toilet trained, stop eating, or cry. He may cling to the foster parent and become very disturbed if the foster parent disappears for a few minutes. It is not unusual for a child at this stage to have a favorite object to cling to--a blanket, stuffed animal or such.

Foster parents should set up consistent routines as much as possible like the one the child was used to, if this is known. This is not the time to change clothes, throw away toys, try to toilet train or wean. Foster parents should try to make sure that the child can always find the foster parent. Depending on the child, either let him alone as long as he knows you are close, or if he is receptive, rock, cuddle, talk to and reassure him.

STAGE III

The child develops better large muscle coordination (riding a bike) and begins to master fine motor coordination (using a pencil). He is able to generalize from similar items to forming mental categories and learns more about the regularities of the world. He adds the teacher and a few other adults (scout leader, etc.) to the family and friends as important persons. He tries to conform to expectations of others and begins to be able to understand another's point of view. He can identify and label what he is feeling and can distinguish between a wish and an action, or a motive and guilt. He values rules for their own sake and sees breaking rules as bad. Differences in standards or inconsistent rules are confusing.

Typical Behavior

Takes full responsibility for self care. Participates in games, activities, chores, clubs. May day dream and procrastinate or let some interests take priority over others, swear, develop interest in pornography, sexual curiosity about same sex friends' bodies, masturbate, peeping behavior, experiment with sexual behavior between same-sexed friends or opposite sexed children.

May fear dark, being lost, supernatural, being late for school, not doing well, punishment, not being liked by friends, war, injury, death especially of parents.

Separation

A child at this stage may react to separation either by being very good, hoping if he is good enough he will be returned, or very bad, hoping you will get rid of him. He may be withdrawn, passive, and not eating. He may be aggressive and destructive. His schoolwork may drop. He may suffer nightmares or wet the bed. He may spend a lot of time telling you how good his natural parents are or what they will do when they catch up with you.

The foster parent must set up a consistent, warm, accepting atmosphere, but set limits. Recognition of the child's feelings as normal and natural, while insisting on appropriate limits to behavior and not interfering when it is not necessary will win out in the long run. Being readily available to talk and giving hugs and physical affection if it is accepted are still important.

STAGE IV

Even if the child has progressed through all of the other stages, it is not until adolescence he reaches this stage. He faces the rapid growth and changes of puberty and becomes capable of abstract thinking about the world. He begins to focus on his peer group as most important. He develops an interest in the opposite sex and starts the process of separating from the family. He also develops empathy for another's point of view. The young adolescent is a conformist to standards of his friends; later he develops more tolerance for non-conformity. He can identify feelings and their causes. He needs an identity as part of a group to avoid alienation or lonely feelings of being left out. He can carry rules inside rather than depending on adults to enforce rules. We say he has developed a conscience, so that breaking rules causes discomfort. He sees some rules as applying to everyone.

Typical Behaviors

Begins to differentiate self concept from how others react, participates in peer group and dating behavior, explores own sexuality. May participate in fads or become heavily involved in activity, special interest or religion.

Has anxieties about peer relationships and school. Worries about appearance - skin, weight, physical changes. Concerned about world conditions, getting a job, making it on one's own. Sometimes highly critical about adults.

Separation

Again, a young person at this stage will react to separation. Passive, withdrawn behavior may alternate with angry and aggressive behavior. The teen may be especially conciliatory and very careful of appearance and trying to do well, or sloppy, negativistic, and a trouble maker.

At this stage, the foster family should let the teen set the pace of the relationship, letting the young person know they care and are available to help, but that he or she is free to determine his or her own behavior within limits.

APPENDIX D

BEHAVIORAL CONTRACTING WITH AN ADOLESCENT IN FOSTER CARE*

Behavioral contracts serve to develop concrete goals which the young person can be expected to attain. They help to motivate the youth and provide a reference point to measure progress. They also are useful in teaching responsibility for ones self, decision making and independence. Contracting reduces emotional conflict by redefining the relationship as a "business arrangement" removing the highly charged emotionalism from foster parent - foster teen interactions about responsibilities and privileges. There are several options for contracting depending on the situation. In all of them the worker serves as mediator. Expectations should be clear and sanctions and privileges should be spelled out so that the contractual allegations don't become a point of debate and conflict.

Behavioral Contract

Option 1 - The worker helps the youth and the foster parents spell out their expectations of each other. Examples of expectations of the teen can be - no drinking, cooking dinner, attending school, coming home on time. Those for the foster parent might include behavior management techniques (being consistent, following through on consequences/threats), attending training, asking for worker support. This contract is useful in attempting to strengthen a placement that is in trouble or could be used for pre-placement planning.

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* adapted from Emotional Development by Emily Jean McFadden

CONTRACT

Youth Responsibility	Foster Parent Responsibility

Signed:

Foster Parent ____________________

Youth ____________________

Worker ____________________

Date ____________________

Option 2 - The youth's responsibilities are clearly spelled out and tied to a specific privilege or sanction. An example might be: privilege--using the car; responsibility--coming home on time; sanction--staying home the next night; bonus--on time all week, get to stay out two hours later on Saturday night.

CONTRACT

Privileges	Responsibilities	Sanctions	Bonuses

Signed:

Foster Parent____________

Youth____________________

Worker___________________

Date_____________________

APPENDIX E

GUIDELINES FOR FOSTER PARENTS: WHEN TO ASK FOR HELP*

Foster parents do a very difficult and demanding job. Before you became foster parents, you probably experienced the normal stresses and strains of family life. But fostering brings a lot of new experiences and challenges which may affect not only the foster child, but also the well being of the entire family. In order to assist you in providing good care for the child, this agency has a commitment to working in a team approach. As team members, you are expected to keep the worker informed of problem areas and things that are going well. Some foster parents are reluctant to contact the agency for fear that they will be considered as inadequate or will be blamed for the child's difficulty.

This is not the case. We know how difficult some of the children can be. We are aware of the effect on the entire family of problems with a foster child. We consider honest communication and requests for assistance as a sign of strength. Straightforward reports of problems with a child show that you are cooperating with the team approach. We encourage you to contact the worker when you feel you could benefit from some additional planning for the child. We urge you to let us know if the family is being stressed by the child. It is your right and responsibility to keep us informed and request assistance when needed.

The following are some guidelines, developed by foster parents and workers together. They are based on typical situations in which foster parents have needed to sort things out with the workers.

BEHAVIOR OF THE FOSTER CHILD

The behavior of the child is dangerous to himself and others.

The behavior of the child is bizarre, exaggerated or inappropriate for his/her age.

The behavior of the child is getting him into trouble at school or in the neighborhood.

The behavior of the child is causing a great deal of extra expense or work for the family.

The behavior of the child does not make sense to you, and is difficult for you to understand with your knowledge of child development and the effects of separation trauma.

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* adapted from Emotional Development by Emily Jean McFadden

EFFECTS ON THE FAMILY

Your own children are upset or developing problems as a result of conflict with the foster child.

It is becoming more difficult for members of the family to see the child in a positive light.

You and your spouse, or you and your children are experiencing increasing anxiety or conflict about the foster child.

You are so busy taking care of the foster child's needs or problems that you don't have time for recreation, privacy or enjoyment of each other.

The foster child gets "too close" to your spouse, and tries to shut you out of the relationship.

You find yourself preoccupied with problems of the foster child; you or someone else in the family is having trouble eating, sleeping, or being able to get away from the child for a few hours.

The family cannot afford to maintain the usual lifestyle because of financial expense for the foster child.

You are aware that things that go wrong in the family are being blamed on the foster child.

DISCIPLINE

The child does not respond to normal discipline.

If the child does not respond to normal discipline, you find yourself needing to escalate the level of discipline. For example, you have tried talking to the child, taking away privileges and are now considering spanking. Or spanking doesn't work, and you are considering hitting as the only way to manage behavior.

The child appears to be attempting to provoke you into more serious physical discipline. For example, the child who taunts "Go ahead and hit me" or the child who physically lashes out at you.

All children will test the limits set by the parents. But the child who consistently tests limits or breaks rules without seeming to learn from the experience needs extra help.

You find it increasingly difficult to stick to discipline techniques approved in the discipline policy. You are aware that you are starting to want to use discipline techniques which are not allowed, because the child doesn't respond to your best efforts.

You are feeling frustrated or are losing hope that you will be able to manage the child's behavior in a productive way.

THE AGENCY AND COMMUNITY

The medicaid card or foster care payment is late, and there is an immediate need that must be met.
You need assistance in locating a community resource to help the child. (Doctor, dentist, team, scout troop, tutoring, etc.)

You have asked for help at a community resource, but you are denied access, or put on a long waiting list.

You are feeling isolated or unsupported by the agency or staff.

You know that you need training or reading materials about a certain problem the child is having.

You do not understand your part in the case plan for the child.

You have relevant information about the child's family.

You are feeling stressed or are experiencing value conflicts from your involvement with the child's family.

You are concerned that the child is being hurt in some way by the relationship with the natural family or the agency plan.

You need the workers' support or advocacy to deal with the school.

You do not believe you are receiving adequate compensation or reimbursement for the expenses of the child, the amount of transportation you provide, the damage done by the child to your home.

You are having difficulty coping with the pressure or criticism of the neighbors about the foster child.

REMEMBER: It is your right to contact the worker for assistance. There are many valid reasons to ask for consultation, not just the ones listed above. However, if you are concerned about the child, or your family is stressed for any of the reasons listed above, it is important to let the agency know. We can assist in a plan to handle the child's behavior, we can connect you with community resources that can help, and we can work together to reduce the stress on your family.

APPENDIX F

FOSTER PARENTS' RIGHTS TO SHARE IN DECISION MAKING FOR THE FOSTER CHILD:

Some Issues That Foster Parents Should be Aware Of*

By: Mark Hardin and
Patricia Tazzara

Because they provide the day-to-day care, foster parents have unique knowledge and insights concerning their foster children. It is essential to the well being of many foster children that this knowledge is not lost in planning in several areas:

Greater involvement in decision-making processes.

Better access to necessary information about the child and family (along with greater, clearer legal responsibility to maintain confidentiality).

More sympathetic and constructive working relationships with natural parents.

We do not suggest that foster parents should or could make the ultimate decisions regarding the child's placement or custody. But it is appropriate and necessary that the foster parents' voices be heard when many critical decisions are made.

Foster parent organizations are crucial to enhancing the role of foster parents. They can work constructively and informally with child welfare agencies and can press for legal reforms, both in the form of revised agency rules and regulations and state laws. Foster parent organizations have, in many states, successfully pressed for:

Better access to information essential for care of the child (and the obligation to maintain confidentiality).

The right to file grievances to stimulate better planning for the child.

The right to a hearing prior to removal of a child that has been in the foster home for a long period of time.

The right to participate in periodic review hearings for children in foster care.

Priority in agency adoption placement decisions, after the child has been in the foster placement for a certain time.

> The right to initiate proceedings for legal custody or adoption and to challenge the agency's decision to deny adoption.

Individual foster parents can also do more to enhance their role. They can use their tact, their persistence, and their assertiveness to assure that the child receives necessary care. And, and a last resort, foster parents can pursue legal remedies, when firmly convinced that it is critical to the well-being of the child.

This brief paper is intended, not as legal advice, but to alert foster parents to some of the key legal issures affecting their role in decision-making for the child. We hope that the paper will stimulate foster parents to more often seek out and obtain good legal advice and to take a more active role in shaping state law.

FOSTER PARENTS' ACCESS TO ADEQUATE INFORMATION CONCERNING THEIR FOSTER CHILDREN

The child welfare agency never told us about our foster child's prior history of delinquency. He has been in our home for three months, and already a number of incidents have occurred at school, including a case of arson. Don't we have a right to full disclosure of information prior to taking the child into our home?

There are various federal and state regulations which control the release of confidential information, and the agencies do often use such laws to deny foster parents access to important information. However, many of these laws are vague and amibiguous. Agencies are often confused as to the numerous rules affecting access, and sometimes manipulate them to prevent disclosure to foster parents.

Foster parents obviously need certain information in order to carry out the role which the state has assigned them, and confidentiality laws should be interpreted in light of these needs. Foster parents need information about matters which will effect their other family members, their daily routine, and their responsibilities as foster parents.

What are the laws which regulate access to records concerning children?

There are federal regulations which control access to child abuse and neglect records. In addition, there are state omnibus statutes called "privacy acts" or "fair information practices acts" which determine access to state agency information. States also have specific laws limiting access to child abuse and neglect records and juvenile court records. Most states have separate confidentiality laws which apply to welfare and social service records.

Some states, instead of having a particular statute on confidentiality of abuse records, leave it to the state welfare agency to make rules governing the release of these records.

What types of questions should I ask the agency before I take a foster child into my home?

You should request any information which helps you to care for and deal with your foster child. This includes information about the child's natural parents if it helps you to deal with the child. Here are a few important items:

* Information from the child's medical history, concerning any physical, mental or behavioral problems which need special attention.
* The child's history of juvenile delinquency, if applicable.

* The reason for the child's removal from the natural parent's home, including the parent's conduct or condition if that was the reason for removal.

* Past abuse or neglect of the foster child.

* Length of time that the foster placaement is expected to last, plus any pending court proceedings that may affect the length of time in placement.

* Any special education needs or problems of the child.

* The child's general habits and behavior traits.

I can't afford a lawyer to interpret all those laws and regulations. Are there any points I might bring up to convince the agency to share information with me?

* Explain that you are only requesting information to help you deal with and care for the foster child. As for information about the parents, make it clear that you only want information to help you to understand the foster child and deal with the parents at visitation.

* Ask for information, not access to written records.

* Point out that the agency has to use some discretion in applying confidentiality laws. If they applied their rules mechanically, agencies might not be able to communicate the child's name or even essential medical information, such as a child's epilepsy. The point is, if the caseworker is

asserting an overly restrictive policy on confidentiality, the agency is probably not consistently following such a policy.

Ask for a copy of the agency's confidentiality regulations. If refused, contact an attorney, or the state attorney general's office.

You should be considered part of the treatment team and be provided all information you need to make an informed decision whether to take a particular child and then to provide responsible and appropriate care. But remember, if the agency shares sensitive information with you, you have a responsibility not to share the information with friends or acquaintances. Divulging such information may even be a crime.

What can I do to get better access to school records?

Ask the child welfare agency having legal custody of the child to execute a release to the school, allowing you access to that information.

If your foster child is handicapped or learning disabled, perhaps you can convince the agency to allow you to be the signatory to the child's Individual Education Plan that will give you access to information and will give you a principle role in educational planning for the child.

I have had problems getting basic medical information and getting prompt authorization for necessary medical care.

Again, some agencies are willing to send a release of information to medical providers, allowing them to give necessary medical information to foster parents.

The agency may also be willing to give you written authority to authorize routine medical care.

If you have problems securing payment for the child's medical care, you may wish to ask the agency to issue a separate medical card for the child.

*Opinions expressed in this paper are solely those of the authors. Reprinted with permission of the authors.

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